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MAALESH

*A Theatrical Tour in the
Middle-East*

by the same author

Children of the Game

Paris Album

The Eagle has Two Heads

and others



Jean Cocteau.

(Photographed for *The Observer* by Jane Bown)

J E A N C O C T E A U

MA A L E S H

*A Theatrical Tour in the
Middle-East*

translated by
Mary C. Hoeck

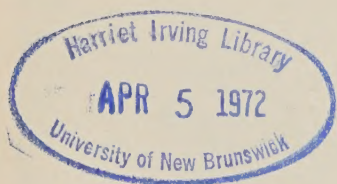
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20th February, 1949.

"Dear God, I thank you for having lent me my lady mother." Such were the words of St. Louis at the death-bed of Blanche of Castille.

On my journey through life I think of these words each time that death takes one of my fellow travellers. Many go, but I remain; they are swallowed up by the waves which devour them with heartless ferocity.

The last one to go, Christian Bérard, leaves me with a feeling of emptiness like sea-sickness, an unbearable sickness of the soul.

He lived his life with so deep an intensity and in the midst of such disorder—a disorder which grew with the increasing momentum of his work—that we thought we saw in his olympian figure one of the immortals come to earth once more.

Each time Fate plays the same joke on us in the same way. No doubt our foolish astonishment, which throws us into a state of paralysis and stupor, comes from our old habit of refusing to look upon death as the normal state from which the abnormal phenomenon of life emerges and stays with us for a while only.

Here is the story in a few words. Bérard was finishing his work for Molière's *Fourberies de Scapin* at the Marigny Theatre. Standing in the front stalls he was giving a last look at the stage, and his dog, tied to him by a string, was helping with the arrangements of the stage setting. Like a trail of smoke, like a stray cat, like a ghost of the towns where we used to spend all our holidays, the setting came on to the stage piece by piece. First the staircase with its iron rungs, then the urinal and its lamp, then the sky and the pearl-grey sea, with houses hanging from peaks as washing is hung out in Marseilles or in Sicily, then the cupola of the little church, then . . . then Bérard fell, struck down by something which had exploded in his head. Jouvet and Jean Louis Barrault in his diced costume as Scapin, assisted by the stage hands, carried him on their shoulders between the empty stalls, looking as if their procession had walked out of some Shakespearean tragedy. This procession went on and on until, in the cemetery of Père-Lachaise,

we had the terrible though entrancing shock of seeing him laid in the earth beside Raymond Radiguet.

First it was the portrait of René Crevel and others, who like him sleep standing up as well as lying down (like swimmers with their arms flung round a dream). Then it was Jean Desbordes's funeral effigies—in the Egyptian sense of the term—and later it was effigies of others and finally of myself in Munroe Wheeler's office in the New York Gallery of Modern Art. As I saw each fresh work of art by Bérard, I felt more and more that I had adopted his personality to the point of fearing to speak of him lest I should seem to speak of myself.

He had just finished re-doing the décor and costumes for *La Machine Infernale* which we are now taking with us to Egypt. It is therefore with him that I am fleeing from a city where everything throws his being into relief and reminds me of him. It is the story of this tour of which I propose to write, although I am still uncertain of what it will be like. I am writing these words in my country house at Milly. The mild February air deceives both birds and trees which break, the birds into song and the trees into leaf. It was here that Christian Bérard *lived* only a few weeks ago, it was here that he began doing his work for my film *Orphée*. From this long visit he has left me some fifty sketches which at all costs will have to be made into a setting for the film sponsored by him.

Here we are “in the place of his powerful presence”. Here the flame of his red beard still shines. Flame he was, and he loved the fire which devastates while it gives life. He loved it so well that he would leave a house which settled down again to peace, in which flames had died down. It was not drama that he loved, nor that he sought, nor awakened, but rather a certain tension of the atmosphere without which he no longer felt any interest in things, and whose absence made him disappear like a cloud. In an atmosphere strung to the right pitch he could breathe and move, stroll from one room to another, draped in a dressing gown full of spots, paint and holes. When he painted he did so with his very body, he waged a strange battle with paint, mopping his brow with a paint rag,

using his dressing gown to rub out or to shade off or to blow his nose, making with his work a frightful union, as in some dream of ancient mythology. As he passed into his creation, so did his creation into him. The interchange of sweat and ink left the floor strewn with all those superfluities which mere craftsmen painters use to decorate their work. There remained alone stark beauty, free of all engaging details. He retained nothing but what was proper to his subject, which meant total absence of fussiness, a freedom which I feel to be the right of beauty.

It is now the twentieth of February, 1949, and we take off by air on the sixth of March. Already some of our advance luggage has gone off. We are rehearsing either at the office of *Le Journal* in the rue de Richelieu, or at Yvonne de Bray's home, or at the Théâtre Antoine where Simone Bériot has lent us the stage. Jean Marais is filming *Mayerling*. By day he is making the film, and by night he is rehearsing six plays. He never rests, and when he can find time he designs and cuts out the costumes for *Britannicus*. Young girls who pester him and think the life of a star is one long day-dream should help him in his work if they wish to understand him.

25th February.

I should like to linger a moment before our departure to speak of our friend who has gone.

Jouvet telephoned the news to me at 5 o'clock in the morning.

When I reached rue Casimir-Delavigne and passed under the archway, I knew by the flashes of light that the photographers had arrived. A journalist barred my way, saying "Tell me about Bérard". When I answered, "I'm half dead, leave me alone," he exclaimed, "What a good head-line. I'll use it". (And so he did).

The caretaker's little girl was hopping on one foot in the entry, singing away to herself, "Monsieur Bérard is dead! Monsieur Bérard is dead!" I went up the six flights. In the hall a few intimate friends welcomed me. Bérard was in his room, the tiny hole which he used as a room. Its walls were red, covered with pinned up cuttings from papers, with photographs, with all the hundred and one bits and pieces he had taken from his pockets. He was lying under nondescript coverings in the position, in the cloak of a dead-tired man who had gone to sleep, hunched up, without enough strength to take off his clothes. Before touching his body, we had to await the arrival of the doctor responsible for the inquest. People used to say that Bérard's eyes alone made his face beautiful. Now these eyes were closed. A sort of dull flush and reflections from the crimson walls gave life to his cheeks and to the burning bush of his beard. His huge face was smiling, like that of the Jupiter of Ingres, or of some Neptune. He was amazing in his majesty. The roar, the cyclonic gestures and laughter which announced his presence in a room, had given place to the stillness of one of the sleepers in his early canvasses. In these canvasses, he had given us the picture of sleep, while his contemporaries painted dreams; they were great effigies mixed with sand and wax, human ramparts against the waves of dreams, sentinels by the edge of silence.

How many times we had seen Bérard like this, with his clothes on when we had made him get up and follow us, still sticky with sleep, charcoal and coloured chalks! It was from heavy sleep like this that Jouvett dragged him each morning to fling him back into his work. Sometimes Bérard would leave his bed and go on his way after merely rubbing his face with a hand towel soaked in Eau de Cologne.

Standing by this sleeper who no longer slept, this marvellous piece of broken mechanism, incidents came back to me which had gone unnoticed at the time, because habit hides such things from us, and it is only when something shakes them down from the tree of life, that they stand out from the whole.

For instance, I can see Bérard again, at Milly, in the room

where I was writing the film *Orphée*, struggling to clothe, to draw, to give substance to the being of Death. These were his last fashion drawings. He said, "Death must be the most elegant woman in the world, because she is concerned with nothing but herself".

In order to feel the reality of this everlasting search for truth, which seems like madness to a world pleased with its own formless madness, and which treats as mad all those who move towards beauty, one has only to be with Picasso for a few moments. Bérard was only a train-bearer. He had not the fierce approach of a bungling god, who can, at a moment's notice, pull himself together and go forward by means of the accidental. He fell in love with chance findings and drew out of them charm, ceremony and pageantry. Picasso proceeds along his way by means of accidents alone and gives them to the public, as he finds them, in the complete intensity of the original impingement.

Nevertheless, these two men, so different from one another, let loose on the stage (in *Parade*, *Mercure* and *La Machine Infernale*) cries from which no sweet songs have been manufactured, and where nothing artificial nor any pious lie has any place at all.

Thursday, 24th February, 1949.

Last night rehearsals of *Les Monstres Sacrés* at the premises of *Le Journal*. The sketch takes on shape. With Yvonne de Bray there is nothing lovelier than the sketch. One thinks of Watteau's outlines. The few people who are sitting in the stalls, and who usually listen to nothing when a rehearsal is going on, become an attentive audience. Idle talk ceases, eyes and ears are focussed on the little stage. Not only has this actress astounding genius, but she leads actors who work with her forward to new finds. Suddenly something mysterious takes place and inner light shines out; what was a sketch gives birth to action and speech firmly laid down in a finished form.

The way in which Yvonne de Bray works defies analysis. It is inimitable and seems to elude her own understanding. Never is this fountain of life drugged nor directed by her intelligence. But as intuition with her takes on the form of intelligence, so does it cause a precipitate of which we are conscious without having the time to judge it. It makes us feel imperatively. No more than I wonder what was the role in life of the man who gave his name to the street where I am walking, no more than I can envisage the gestures of the cook who cooks my meal, no more than I imagine the animal from whose skin the shoes which I put on were made, no more than any of these can I think that such and such a sentence of Yvonne de Bray came from work done by her memory and her observation of others. Walking, eating, putting on my shoes and looking at this actress living the unreal life which I give her, I am unaware that it is I who give her this life, and its unreality passes understanding, since it is more true than truth.

Each time that this reality greater than truth springs out with full force from the text, those in the front row turn round to the row behind them with a strange expression of "can this be true?" That's what their faces say. And when the actress becomes amusing, laughter explodes, and then when the final scene begins to unfold, tears come into everyone's eyes.

De Bray teaches us better than anyone the meaning of the word "commerce", which is so looked down on, but which dominates us. In our sphere, trade has more meaning than in any other because those who ply it must cover it up until no trace remains for others to see.

2nd March, 1949.

Yesterday evening, the rehearsal of *Les Parents Terribles* was amazing. The film has made me do certain corrections to the text. This worries the actors however—the play belongs to them, as they

acted it—the rest does not matter. The prompter prompts with the words used in the complete edition of my works as published by Gallimard. The actors become angry. Their anger is typical of the family in my script. If one misses the ball, the other picks it up, as if they were playing for the Davis Cup. The three acts have been taken to pieces by them, have taken on their shapes and have become supple through long usage . . . The material of a film is too short. On the stage, there must be perspective, weight, a firm grasp, all things which demand broad, long material. But they no longer act that way; they fold it around themselves, my substance has become theirs. I listen to them and look at them open-mouthed. If I tried to intervene, they would not be more conscious of me than of a ghost passing through the room. Plays only have beauty when they reach this very rare state. Normally actors follow each other, they never intermix, they do not become a team. Actually the play has left me. The umbilical chord has been cut. It has a life of its own. I only spoil it. I am only a dead body in the stalls.

3rd March, 1949.

Colette telephoned me. I went over to see her. She asked me to persuade Jean Marais to act "Chéri". That if he accepts she will re-write the play. Marais hesitates. He feels he is no longer young enough for the part (says he). "He's mad," says Colette, "He is the age of the part".

Opéra. I have finished all the arrangements for the décor and the costumes of Auric's ballet *Phèdre*, so that the work can go ahead. I had to pace the floor while a large lady was giving an audition for *Carmen*. Went to Karinska to explain in detail the costumes, make-up and wigs. I advised Lifar to engage an actress who could mime the part, with movements which were nearly but not quite a dance. This evening, *Les Parents Terribles* again. Gaby Sylvia is first class, although it is difficult for her to follow in

Josette Day's footsteps. What a genius an author would have to be to know beforehand how actors would turn his text inside out and so give life to it. No one in the little hall. An old bench on the stage. Newspaper men in the wings. And never did Marais play better in the second act.

Everyone thinks that the film is better than the play, and I was taken in by the general feeling. To-night I see that this was the opinion of a careless age, which prefers telegrams to letters. Marcel André is right, the film only retains the high lights of the play. The stage business is altogether lacking. Facial expressions in 'close-ups' alone save it.

Diderot was an actor in real life and gave his rhythm to all those who worked with him. No doubt acting at that time was such that sensitivity in an actor made him either ridiculous or mediocre. The actors at whom I was looking to-night made this outlook seem rather strained. The more they play these three acts, the more they let themselves go, and expend themselves in it, the less do they exercise conscious control over their actions. This is why the public at large usually admires and gives allegiance to those who leave their work unfinished and who allow all the strings to be seen. Perfect work looks too simple and everyone thinks they could do what seems so effortless just as well. It is not uncommon for an actor of genius to impress the public less than one who is only talented, but whose gift exhibits more contrasts and outstanding moments such as the actor of genius would eventually eliminate. The latter goes straight to the soul, not to the eyes and ears. But on the stage exaggeration will always be considered finer than what is just right.

6/7th March, 1949.

Had a look at the press articles. Always the same idiotic remarks, the same mistakes. "*Les Parents Terribles*—a disturbing

piece." You've said it! Jean Genet's *Haute Surveillance*. Jean-Jacques Gauthier (may he forgive me for turning critic too) writes the expected article, "Enough of these ignoble plays, etc. . . ." The funny thing is that the only real criticism of this play would be to reproach me with putting into it nobility of sentiment and language which border on the inhuman. Genet is a moralist in the sense that he has moral standards from which he never deviates by a hair's breadth. As a result it sometimes sounds as if he were preaching. Besides, Genet is a writer of fables, who makes his animals talk. He invents, or rather expresses, the psychology of dumb creatures who have none, or who may possess such a subtle type of psychology that they can only express it by silence or violence. His vocabulary is therefore enormously superior to that which his characters would use. They therefore become heroes, high-minded complicated beings who translate into words shades of meaning coming from a world besides which conventional "elegant society" would seem in comparison disgustingly clumsy.

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I thought that for once we would leave without incidents. But a rhythm is a rhythm and one cannot get away from one's own.

In the 'bus which took the company from the Invalides station to Orly, a remark by Marcel André about memoir writers woke me up with a shock—I had forgotten my leather case in which I keep my notes. Dermithe jumped out of the 'bus into one of the Lombrosos' cars and went back into town. At 9.55 he had not come back; as the loss of one minute meant the stopping of gratuity for the staff, we started to get in. Dermithe came up at full speed at a minute to the hour. He had my passport and my tickets in his pocket, and he had found the case which had simply been put down at home. Newspaper men had already photographed us going aboard at La Perrichon and La Fenouillard.

When they had nearly reached Orly, driving quickly, a car had come right across their path. Dermithe and Lombroso had escaped

by a miracle. Now there is peace; only the noise of the engines which will be with us till we reach Heliopolis, to which we are flying in a single lap.

Heavenly caravan! My family out of *Les Parents Terribles*, this "disturbing" family, which is a childlike one and, as Father Couturier used to say, "before evil", this family which is not ruled by the unnatural laws of which middle class families are so proud, in a word a family of actors who continue to play their parts in the wings, this little family of mine dozes with the lights out, sitting between stage managers and dressers.

Gide, on whom I called yesterday because the look of the handwriting in his last letter worried me, is actually recovering from a rather serious heart attack; he spoke to me of Egypt, and confirmed what I had feared. Too much kindness eats up the people who work there and who cannot lead tourists' lives. We got everything off our chests as we used to in the country last month, when he came to my home there every afternoon while he was living in the Melun district. Everything is now all right between us. We straightened out all that had put us at cross purposes and confused us, all the things which made him speak of me as he did in his journal. He admitted to me that he had wanted to kill me. This is a first-rate example of dangerous visits of 'Young people' such as I speak of in *La Difficulté d'Etre*. Here the tragic climax, like that in *Les Monstres Sacrés*, is reached. In order to seem interesting and to play a part, an idle young man goes from one person to another with stories which he has invented. Little by little doubt creeps in, the tinder is lighted, and a friendship goes up in flames. Oceans of feeling then separate human beings whom a few minutes conversation would have brought together again. We were victims of inveterate creators of mythological stories, and it had taken us years to come together and find our old love of each other. Gide would have liked to have eaten his words, but it was too late. But what does it matter? What does not poison the heart has no importance. Perhaps we care for each other all the more because of what has happened.

Fifteen years of cold war with the surrealists all came from such

fabrications. The terrible thing is that in Paris no one tries to throw light on this kind of murky darkness peopled by ghosts. I am speaking of the way the air was cleared with Eluard and Aragon on the one hand, and with Gide on the other, in order to warn my fellow writers.

Two dangers threaten us in the "Mémoires". First danger: the work of young people who amuse themselves by rousing us against each other and so set our defensive mechanisms in action before we can control them. Second danger: youth which is angry because it feels too dependent on us, which thinks its freedom is in danger and which does not hesitate to attack us and to show us up in an unfavourable light by setting in motion other self defensive actions. In the first instance youth is working unseen, in the second it comes into the open. It sometimes happens that remorse makes someone admit the crime, but then it is too late.

The case of Maurice Sachs is even more strange. He pretended to be dying in the Hôtel de Castille, begged me by telephone to come, and when I was there he confessed to thefts and lies he had told about me, begging forgiveness. As may be imagined I immediately forgave him. He wept and promised that what he had written would never be published. He said that he was ashamed of what he had put down and that he had lied as much about himself as about others.

He died. But his death occurred much later, in Germany and in strange circumstances. His manuscripts were in safe keeping—with another young man to whom I had introduced him. The keeper of these documents, although my friendship for him has not changed, does not dare to face me. Maurice Sachs is no longer there to make the confession which he formerly made to me. The writings live on. I have not learnt wisdom from this. These are the risks of our job.

The 'plane purrs on. Some of the passengers gossip in low voices, while others sleep. I think of my life of struggle, luck and ill-luck. I would not exchange it for any other. It has been so full, so crowded with people, so mad, so indescribable, so

different from the life of which others tell, that what comes to me in the future can only be in the nature of luxury. I should not like to meet, even for five minutes, the creature who is spoken of as "Jean Cocteau". I am glad of these inventions as they keep many people away from me and give me the illusion of being alone although I am forced to live in the limelight. In a sense they even make me invulnerable.

Pins stuck into a wax figure can only be effective if the wax figure is like us.

Reading what I write, everyone imagines me to be different from what I am. Looking at my writing the graphologists make no such mistakes. I am continually given proof of this. That is because writing is more important than what is written. And even the printed text bears the stamp of the man who is something more than the style in which he writes. It denudes him, shows him up through the way in which he weaves his words, through the procession of his cyphers, through the deep arabesques of his thought, through the flowing tracery of what banks call an *unforgeable signature*.

One wonders how Picasso, bothered as he is by visitors, can possibly work. He works in secret, when others are eating, sleeping, when their unfocussed vibrations allow him to put his world in order as he wishes it to be and not as they wish it. He never gives a bite on their line, because then he would have to relinquish his own. When a lady asked him "What does that represent?" he replied "That represents a million". And to another who asked if his works were jokes, he answered "All works are jokes, starting with the masterpieces". People cannot anticipate the surprises which an inventor of new modes of expression will give them. Something fresh and surprising strikes the public as a joke, and a bad joke at that, as it startles them from their sleep and makes them come out of their own world where they amble along in comfort. It throws them against the wall.

On the night that *Le Sacre du Printemps* caused such an uproar when it was given at the Champs-Élysées in 1913, the old Countess de Pourtalès brandished her ostrich feather fan over the curving

edge of her box, screaming "It's the first time in my sixty years that anyone has dared to make fun of me!" The good lady only expressed aloud what others always think to themselves when they look upon a new facet of beauty.

And Picasso also says, "I can do no better than God, who always proceeds by trial and error".

When I am pleased with myself it always worries me, and I wonder what mistake I have made, by what closed door, by what chink in my armour the outside world has penetrated into me.

When critics think that a book is "very powerful" it usually means that there are mannerisms in the writing. Whereas a writer must be like those actors who know that they work best with their hands in their pockets.

Everything now rushes forward. At Maisons-Laffitte, when I was a boy, I would not believe that the Wright Brothers could fly. Now we are flying to Egypt. At Montparnasse, in 1916, grass still grew between the paving stones. Vegetable carts were still being pushed along by their owners. People gossipped in the middle of the road. It was in the middle of the road that I asked Picasso to do *Parade*. We walked about in our espadrilles. After that, artists wore them because they thought that this was the right thing to do in Montparnasse.

7th March, 1949.

Stopped writing because I felt sick like most of the others. This type of plane is not air-conditioned, not a breath of air.

9th March, 1949.

Got out of the 'plane at Heliopolis, ridiculously pale and dead-tired. This is the sorry sight that the photographers take, running

from all sides, kneeling on the ground with their cameras glued to their eyes. Gabrielle Dorziat and Yvonne de Bray alone, true to their fame as celebrated actresses, walked down the gangway, looking fresh and strong as when they walk down a castle staircase. Marais was right not to bring his dog. The trip might have killed him.

Elizabeth Prévost and a friendly crowd were waiting for us and came with us through the Customs. Here one finds again the cries, bustle and disorder of the Mediterranean nations. Trunks get lost, are found again and hover in the air. We can guess what powerful guardian angels watch over us. Customs examinations, which in Egypt are never ending, only last a few minutes. We find ourselves outside in the sun, losing each other, finding each other again, until one of Mohamed Wahid-el-din's cars, driven by his secretary, rolls up and carries us off.

From this minute, Wahid's car and secretary are ours. He guesses our slightest movements. It is useless to make a secret of our outings, car and secretary will always be there.

Egyptian cars are magnificent and powerful. At least they express the power of Egypt, but they cannot be used. Except for the road to the Pyramids and the car route from Cairo to Alexandria, laid out by Shell, and the road to Fayoum, there are no roads.

From the car, the first thing that strikes one is that here the extremes of luxury and poverty meet. If at times luxury lacks elegance, poverty flaunts hers. On the pavements, on the boundary lines made of hardened mud, on the bridges, on the hired carts heaped up with women clothed in black, with long dirty undergarments, their yashmaks rolled round their heads, go the barefooted, dark-necked women, looking noble and rich in their apparel which no theatrical costume could equal.

This race of strollers, who sleep in the dust, takes on through some form of mimetic art, the shades of the sand, the sky and the waters of the Nile. Born for idleness and death, which is longer and more certain than life, this people, which has become unnerved by coffee, hasheesh and black tea, spends its time between the acquisi-

tion of a little learning and the little death of sleep. Cars never stop their hooting. Chauffeurs blow their horns without reason as children do their trumpets. The screeching of horns, hooting in every key, rises up to my bedroom in the hotel like the racket of Marseilles.

We went through parts of the town which remind one of Nice, to which Egyptians in the past brought some of the characteristics of their land. Minarets, villas, little gardens, red and ochre frontages, greenish shutters, palm trees, blue sky, balustrades, cabs with awnings, everything looks like the Place Masséna of a dream. (Green which is not really green, grey which is hardly grey, and red which is only reddish).

Stopped writing for a time. Wahid's car came to take me to the Embassy, where I had an appointment with our Ambassador, Gilbert Arvengas. We must have passed the Ambassador's car, in which he had sent the Secretary of Cultural Relations, Yves Régnier, to fetch me. I apologised and explained to the Ambassador how difficult it is to escape from the kindness of Egyptians. On his side, he apologised to me for having arranged a party on Monday to meet our Company. "Three hundred people, who one and all will invite us to their houses..."

Arvengas has a swift, open mind. He is looking for partisans of the French cause. The Embassy is poor and could do much more for France, if our country would understand what she means to the world, instead of underrating the importance of her culture, and endeavouring to copy industrial nations who flaunt their wealth in a way which we cannot hope to copy.

Egypt is under the domination of its "fifty families". There is no middle class. The rest of Egypt is confused and either does nothing or seethes and breaks out into an ill-planned revolution. A King may be killed at any moment. King Farouk likes nothing better than going about the town paying surprise visits to one club after another surrounded by police. Anti-European feeling is less acute than it was a short time ago.

The Ambassador considers that we should do the most we can, doing it with the full knowledge that events take their course in spite of those who think that they are directing them. I quoted to him the words of the photographer from *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel*, "As these mysteries are beyond us, let us pretend that we arranged them", and the approximate words of Chateaubriand, "Napoleon was in a runaway carriage which he thought he was driving". At this point I brought things back to everyday affairs by drawing his attention to the disgraceful condition of French films in Egypt. French films cannot be heard, the public therefore becomes bored by them and will not go to see them. The soundtrack of *Les Parents Terribles* is apparently a disgrace, although in Paris it was perfect. What happens? Ask the Sphinx, and we'll see how and in what language she will answer us.

The day after to-morrow, the 11th, I'll go to Alexandria to see what is really taking place. I imagine that the trouble arises during the process of adding the sub-titles.

While I am writing (on the 10th, I put my writing down and take it up again whenever I have a few minutes) the troops who are returning from Palestine are massing in readiness for a big march past the King. The square is overcrowded. It is rather cold as it has been ever since we arrived in Cairo. They call this cold spell in March "the old woman's chilliness". Tanks, bands and infantrymen go past in disorder, between the crowd which shouts and screams from points of vantage on each others' shoulders. A police car surveys the multi-coloured medley of people under our windows. They now think that it is raining. There are certainly a few drops, but it never rains in Egypt. A few drops are looked upon as a storm. The detectives in the car put on hooded cloaks which look like awnings. Men wearing nothing but shirts fly in all directions with newspapers on their heads. The people who wear tarbooshes cover themselves up with handkerchiefs. The crowd scatters. The cacophony of hooters rules the day. One can imagine what a revolution would be like in a nation whose only idea of

politics consists in thinking what personal advantage might be derived from an uprising of the people.

For the Mohammedans, the Egypt of the Pharoahs was pagan and therefore it does not count. Egypt begins for them at her conquest. Besides, the Egypt of old belongs to the archæologists. Again here there is diversity of opinion. Some are classic archæologists—the Abbé Drioton, Curator of the Museum of Cairo, is the head of this school of thought and the best informed of them. The others, in the Upper Nile region, are striving to discover the Egypt of initiations, of free-masonry, of Cagliostro and of the *Magic Flute*.

In Cairo it is necessary to move about and to express oneself with the greatest circumspection. It is as easy to make a mistake as it is to breathe.

As soon as I had left the 'plane I had sent my respects to the Abbé Drioton, and also to Taha Hussein and again to the Embassy.

On reaching the Hotel Sémiramis, Yves Régnier told me I should have to sign the visitors' book at the Royal Palace. Wahid went with me.

Most of the Palace is deserted. It is freezingly cold because there are no real heating systems in Egypt. One of the King's chamberlains welcomed us. I signed. We drank Turkish coffee together; I am drinking a dozen cups a day but it does not put one off one's sleep.

Before going to the Hotel Sémiramis, we had lunch near the Pyramids on the terrace of Mena-House. The sky was not then overcast, the sun shone, and the birds were singing. The Pyramid of Cheops resembles an enormous sand castle turned out of a mould. As I have no sense of time, I felt it was 1936 again and that poor Passepartout (Marcel Khill) was still with me when we were doing our world tour. All at once, on opening our shutters to let in the moonlight, we had found ourselves face to face with the Pyramids. They were very near, like three ghosts, like three great actresses in the garden.

12th March, 1949.

I have again had to interrupt these notes to go to Alexandria, from which I have just returned. Carullo drove Wahid's car and was accompanied by his wife. We went by the villages as the road through the desert requires a permit which we had no time to obtain.

As I love permanent things and hate to see beauty disappear—I even feel the loss of certain restaurants and shops belonging to the days of my childhood—I was immeasurably charmed by this road, for here the scene has not changed since Bible days. It even gives an antique air to a bicycle. Here there are villages made of baked mud and here also are men who are coloured mauve, pink or beige; there are noblemen with profiles which look as if they were carved in terra-cotta, and here and there is a fine group consisting of a man mounted on his donkey with which he forms a single whole, sculptured out of the pallor of stone. An earthly mimetism mingles sky, ground, trees, animals and aborigines, rendering them barely visible. (In the theatre, mechanics, who sleep on the floor, become so invisible that people walk on them). On the banks of the Nile slaves with their hands behind their backs, bent forward as beneath a storm, with ropes round their necks, drag along the barges, with their tall billowing sails, full of sacks and earth. Barges, slaves, sacks and earth, white with the same pale dust, go up the Nile whose water, fluted by the wind, takes on the evil shade of absinthe.

As we approach Alexandria the air becomes lighter. Lungs can breathe in more oxygen. We go alongside the jetty with its yellow buildings facing the sea, frothing and dancing and shading into a greenish tinge as it reaches the turquoise horizon, making us forever think of Cleopatra. Cairo is a city of streets; everything happens in the streets. Alexandria is a city of houses; everything happens in the houses.

At the Hotel Cecil—here film-buyers, directors of cinemas and journalists are waiting for me. Enquiry going forward—visit to M. Filliol, the French Consul, an active man who is in despair

about the quite understandable set-back which French films have received. His letters to the film centre remain unanswered. People might have lost all patience and thrown the whole of French films overboard. This is not the case however. The young buyers Nahmia, and the directors of the "Strand" do all they can out of love of France. As I proceed from place to place, and see reel after reel (amongst others a reel of *Quai des Orfèvres*) I come to the conclusion that the tragedy is due to sabotage. But at what point?

Film of *Les Parents Terribles*. One look is enough. The faces of the actors are covered with Arab and Italian sub-titles. They tell me that it is to help people to understand, but sub-titling of this kind prevents anyone from understanding anything. Besides, how could one follow a film covered with hieroglyphics like an obelisk!

Had lunch with the Consul. Went back to Cairo. To the theatre. End of the matinée of *Les Parents Terribles* (play). I have not yet had time to tell about the first night, on the 8th.

(Besides, I have little to say about the showing of this play). Same effects, same success. It seems that the effects take place of themselves. I listened-in to the loud-speaker in the director's box. I said, "Listen, they are going to laugh", and a storm of laughter shook the instrument.

Not a seat to be had till the end of our season. It is the same feeling of surprise as in New York when I was there last. French prestige runs very high. It seems as if France were unconscious of it, or finds nothing strange in being adored as usual. It is a pity. If France would respond to this generous love which others bear her, she would send books and plays and would supervise the presentation of her films. But she asks too much for films (under the counter), cares nothing about books, and as for plays, she lives on in ignorance of work such as Jouvet and our company undertake. Beyond the Porte d'Orleans France imagines that the world is an arid desert.

However! I am amazed at the intelligence, good style, grace and culture of all the important people in Egypt who invite me to their houses. Our Ambassadors and Consuls bear no resemblance to those whom I met during my world tour in 1936. At that time when my uncle, Raymond Lecomte, was Ambassador in Cairo, the most important qualification was the ability to play a good game of tennis. After that just anyone was sent there. M. Arvengas and M. Filliol are not "just anyone". They belong to the grand school of Foreign Diplomacy, as Léger and Giraudoux did. Egyptians speak of them with love and respect. The same applies to M. Joxe and M. Erlanger who sent us here.

One of the chief features of the physical elegance of the Egyptians consists in their length of leg and neck. Their necks are like narrow columns, and the back of the neck is so straight and has such a fine long line, that one forgets the dark burden of the loads which are balanced on the top of the head. No doubt their splendid walk and regal carriage proceed from many generations of slavery. One would like to think that Europeans, who balance nothing on their heads, have a lot inside them, as this would lead them to more dignified and worthy methods of procedure.

Monday, 14th March, 1949.

Last night, Sunday, *Britannicus* kept us busy. We were shut up in the Opera from ten in the morning until after midnight. Jean Marais was already tired out, half dead with overwork, but his love of work and his professional conscience are inexhaustible and he had made the setting of *Les Parents Terribles* take shape, giving it life and the right lighting. On Saturday they gave a matinée and an evening performance of *Les Parents*. Sunday the theatre was closed. *Britannicus* was put into rehearsal. The company rehearsed, looked costumes over, corrected anything wrong, set the stage, sewed, nailed things up and swung the projectors into place. I gave

Marais the idea of separating the mountains of red velvet in two, so transforming the stage, which is open to the sky, into a sort of sumptuous tent or the bridge of a ship. We removed the footlights and arranged lights so that they threw into relief the thrones, the steps and the bases of columns and of the monumental statue. In this lighting the costumes are caught in the most unexpected way. The guards appear. Whenever they move about, the effect is unusual. Marais cut out dark-blue armour on them as they stood; it is similar to that worn by the chieftain in El Greco's "Legionaries of St. Maurice".

One by one Aline, Junie, Britannicus and Agrippine appear. Gabrielle Dorziat, in a red wig studded with emeralds, steps out of a black orchid, whose petals, spiked with silver, fold back, and rise up around her, forming a hard, evil-looking train, like an alligator's tail. She looks like a Chinese actor. And here comes Marais, almost terrifying in his elegance. His hair hangs in curls, powdered with red. He manipulates a scarlet stream of fabric, which he wraps round himself, leaving a length to form a train behind him. I am sorry to see him play as he would in public. I prefer rehearsals which are only fairly good. This evening he will be dog-tired, in a stew, and he'll speak his lines either too low or too loud and will not be able to get back his poise. But we are fools to think such thoughts. The public sees him as we did at the rehearsal. It is a great success.

Supper at Wahid's. And what did Marais say, with his hair out of curl and his beard beginning to grow? "I should like to start the show all over again."

15th March, 1949.

Marais is calm again. He uses his voice, gestures, gaze, feelings, silence, insolence and fabrics in the same masterly way. Dorziat is

the truly frightening lady, with her livid face which crumples up in a fit of pride, hatred, fear and intrigues. Marcel André, who out of love of Racine, and although he knew all the lines by heart had never dared to play the part before, shows us a Narcisse devoid of all the extravagances and traitor-like posturings which most tragedians use in this rôle. Balachova makes a real person out of the part of a minor character. Vanderic is simple, serious, natural and charming. In a word, the play no longer repels the public by lyricism and mouthed lines, it comes stealthily into the auditorium and takes it by storm, with all its poisoned shafts. It becomes so terrible, so new, that respect for the classics alone saves it from the Egyptian censor.

I have promised to give an *ex tempore* talk on the 26th at the Theatre in Alexandria. I wonder if the censor will allow it.

Yesterday lunched at the Italian Embassy. At six o'clock a party at the French Embassy. All Cairo was there.

Always the same warm, gracious welcome. (Perhaps it is mere politeness, but if so, good manners are taken so far that they seem like affection). Whatever may be the case here, it is a fact that understanding comes into being between people who speak to each other by means of signs. The din from the road beneath my window is like that of Marseilles or Naples. Whereas the villas and the palm-trees are those of the Côte d'Azur, like a continuation of Italy. Since the time of Napoleon, and in spite of anti-European outbreaks, France feels at home in Egypt.

The Italian Ambassador quotes my own words to me, words which ran from Venice to Rome, "Italians are good tempered Frenchmen".

Kites and sparrow-hawks swoop down on the terrace at the Semiramis where Marais is staying, and carry off butter and meat in their claws without alighting.

On the golf course they mistake the balls for eggs and fly off with them too.

I have too much to do to see much of Egypt other than what is

near the theatre. We are smothered in flowers. Everyone wants to chop themselves up into little pieces in order to do something for us.

Egyptians are very sensitive; if you accept anything from one person, you must do so from the rest. Every bookseller wishes me to sign copies of my books in his shop. I have put myself in the Ambassador's hands. As I cannot sign books in one shop without doing so in all, and as I have no time to go round all the book-sellers, the Ambassador decides to bring them all together at Shepherd's Hotel and for me to do the signing in a neutral zone.

The cold prevents us from going to visit the Sphinx at night, or to linger late in the Arab streets. Besides, it is difficult to see the Sphinx at night. A special permit is required, so we cannot go on this escapade at a moment's notice. As for the Museum, I am awaiting the return of the Abbé Drioton. For Upper Egypt, I shall need a play which leaves me free, probably the last play—that of Sartre.

Unpleasant greyish weather with a tendency to rain. This is the "Mad Month". Wahid has issued invitations to people to come to the scaffolding-surrounded palace, which belonged to his mother and which is now being re-constructed. At one time this family seat must have been surrounded by gardens. Now the trains run in front of the doors, and one has the impression that luxury has invaded Houilles or Bois-Colombes.

A huge tent has been erected in the garden. It opens up and is caught back at the sides, like a theatre scene, with blue and white cords. Candelabra. Buffet replete with cakes and sheaves of flowers. Servants covered in gold braid. No one touches any food, as we are awaiting the arrival of the Princess Mohamed Ali Ibrahim, daughter of the last Sultan and cousin by marriage of the King. The Princess, who is supernaturally, unbelievably beautiful, arrives at six o'clock. She looks like the young girls described in Arabian tales, of whom one has always thought as inventions of story-tellers.

Barely have I paid my respects to her, when Abdel Rahman Sidky carries me off to an appointment arranged for me with Dr. Taha Hussein.

Stopped writing these notes when the Arab porter knocked at my door. He came to hand me a lighter which I gave him for immediate filling—three days ago!

Felix Rollo told me that “chauffeurs here hoot because they think that the hooters frighten away the red lights”. So I said to the chauffeur, “Why are you hooting?” He replied, “To put out the red light”. I explained to him how the mechanism works, and told him that he could do nothing about it. Just then the lights turned to green. He pointed to them and said, “There, you see!”

All Egyptian drugs are stimulating and enervating. The only opiate is religion. On the road to Alexandria at night, cars go indifferently on either side of the road. What does it matter? “God is great”. Religion is the only hope of a people which is resigned to its fate. This is why they never hesitate between building a beautiful mosque, or a beautiful hospital—they build a mosque, of course!

Looking at this nation it is possible to have some understanding of the attitude of mind of those who do not wish to see the people educated. If they become half-educated, they will be all the more confused, and most likely a class will arise jealous of its neighbour’s privileges. But the learned classes are no longer like those of the Pharaohs and their priests. Unless there is a large number of first-class minds in a country, intelligence does not shine amongst the merely literate. When the upper classes go down, the lower classes go down with them. The artisan class disappears with the downfall of a class which inspired its genius.

Taha Hussein is hampered all round. His difficulties with the censor paralyse his writing. He is a blind man who sees. He sees further than anyone has the right to see in Egypt. His wife is French. Their son Claude is studying in Paris. Before coming to Egypt I already admired this man, now I respect him. His is an inflexible soul. One feels that here is a man whose strength has to be reckoned with and maybe feared. Perhaps this strength has grown since he ceased to be a Minister. It grows in the dark. He is consulted, loved, hated and feared. He does not say, “They read

it to me", he says, "I have read". He spoke to me of *Britannicus*, and he judges it by the mind's eye, not through his ears alone.

One evening at the Italian Opera he was annoyed by the fact that a woman singer was ugly, although she possessed a beautiful voice. "What does her voice mean to me," he said, "she's far too ugly".

On Sundays he holds a reception. He never makes a mistake when introducing people to each other, and when they have left he can give a minute description of them, although he is blind.

He comes of peasant stock, but he is a true aristocrat. The feeling against him and the way he speaks Arabic (he speaks it as it is usually only written and as few people can understand it) damn him in the public eye. Faced with his black glasses which *look* at you, it seems that the remains of ancient Egypt take meaning and are no longer things which one sees during an afternoon walk. Taha Hussein was the Head of the Arts Department. Statesmen, doctors, and Egyptologists come to his delightful house to regain a sense of security in its taut atmosphere where nothing is allowed to flounder, to remain vague or lacking in well-defined outline. He speaks with oracular simplicity. His wife and he were discussing a point relating to *Les Parents Terribles*. He asked me what Yvonne really was. I answered "a child-mother". "That explains everything," he said. "My wife has gained her point. She was right". He did not try to explain his point of view. He no longer even mentioned it. He considered himself to have been mistaken, admitted it at once, and felt that it would be a waste of time to say anything more.

17th March, 1949.

It is very necessary to watch every word that one says here. I said that the deaths of Valéry, Giraudoux and Bérard had given me two, three or four times as much work to do as formerly. What I meant was that I was now asked to do all the prefaces, writing,

designing of scenery and costumes, and autographs for which they had previously been asked. Grenier tells me that the Cairo ladies and gentlemen have not understood my words.

Visited the Gallery of Arabian Art. The Curator and his daughters were friends of Gide. He lived in their home when he made his stay in Cairo. What strikes me is the development of this art from what has style to what is stylised and from what is human to what is non-human and geometric. In reality beauty ends with Saladin. Work which was done with love gives place to work done with the hands alone, made in materials which have no intrinsic relationship with each other, to encrusted work and to platitudinous decorations.

In an art gallery, I am bored to tears as soon as life becomes static. What moves me most are the great doors of the Royal Palace of which the figures, sculptured in relief, are blurred in outline at the base, by donkeys on their everlasting journeys in and out. Immediately this conjures up the roadway and the faces of those who passed the portals. The scenery becomes the background of a play.

In the wings. Last performance of *Britannicus* before the matinée at which it will be presented to boys and girls as part of their classical education. First time that all the actors seem really to be breathing the same air, when new interpretations no longer put things out of balance, when they play as part of a whole without a hitch. Lucien Guitry used to say, "It takes ten indifferent performances to make the eleventh fine production". This is only the sixth. The wheels are oiled, the engine warmed, and nerves delicately balanced, neither under- nor over-strung. The actors know it, feel it and are sure of themselves. The loud-speaker below the stage makes me feel the scenes given on it and which I know so well, better than if I saw them. I *see*, like Taha Hussein, by means of my ears. No one blunders in saying the "buts", the "Madams", the "Ah, my lords" of Racine. The play has taken wings and yet it walks the earth delicately. Heavy yet light, this marvellous tragedy, stripped bare, allows itself to be seen, bones, muscles and dripping entrails. For the hundredth time I hear it and am, as always, enraptured by it. It rears itself aloft as in a pyramid, makes



A drawing by Jean Cocteau.

haste slowly as it rises in tempo, cuts clear its points packed with secrets. Jean Marais uses the odd sentence-construction which flows from one line to the next without spoiling the rhythm and takes from it the patina of age; in this manner he revivifies it for his audience. He throws the text into relief so that it pierces through one. As he throws out each insolently isolated "Madame", we seem to be looking through the key-hole of a Palace in Versailles or Rome. In this palace he is alternately a prince, an arbiter of fashion and manners, a wild beast, or a Chinese executioner.

I went up into the auditorium in order not to lose the sight of his face as he listens to Agrippine. He says, "That's the act which I love playing. In it I listen to everyone, to Agrippine, to Burrhus, and to Narcisse". I feel that the way in which he listens proclaims him to be one of the world's greatest actors.

Dorziat has overcome her fears to-night; they were those of a race-horse who sees a piece of white paper and shies before it reaches it. She has seized upon the scarlet thread of intrigue and follows it home. And naturally, as her intensity grows during her speech, Marais listens to her closely and yet more closely. And with him the audience listens. Silence seems to empty the theatre of the individual people within it. In spite of the triple knocking to indicate that the third act will follow without a stop, the audience refuses to be quiet and continues to applaud.

Below, the endless confabulations of the court of Nero as they were shown to the court of Louis XIV come to an end. Those who a short time ago were the Emperor's guards, are now sitting round him in his room, as he greets his mother who has come to congratulate him. Narcisse again wears Marcel André's delightful smile. Yvonne de Bray, who never leaves the theatre, is going from one dressing room to another. The dressers are sewing, ironing, and serving Turkish coffee. Except for a few journalists who are here every night, people in Cairo do not come into the wings. This is why everyone in the city wonders whether Marais wears a wig when playing the part of Nero. The dresser's little girl who saw him curling and powdering his hair with red powder, has had a stand-up fight at school with other children who do not believe her.

18th March, 1949.

Eleven o'clock in the morning. Sunshine. We have shed our overcoats. I arrived at the theatre. Yesterday, the rehearsal of *Les Monstres* was flabby, did not hold together, was full of gaps. To night we shall give our first performance in public. Whatever we do at 3 o'clock, we shall hope to repeat at six.

To begin with, there are the snags connected with Christian Bérard's work. Once they are put in place, the pieces of the two stage settings are marvels of well balanced work, with clear cut lines. But the colours are not right, and I dare not touch them. I am trying to be Bérard. To be his shirt coming out of his trousers, to be his beard, the spots of paint all over him, his dog "Hyacinth" . . . the red of Esther's home has been toned down. Jean Marais is scouring the town for material which will match up with all this red, and for a bust to put in the place of Carpeaux's.

This morning the décor for the second act is flat on the floor. I walk about amongst all these pieces which will give perspective, slopes and point to the scene, with Marcel André who has brought it into being and who loves my mad enthusiasm for work. Even here, sprawling like a corpse, he lives, expresses himself and strikes the floor as Bérard lived and expressed himself on his death bed, surrounded by red.

The shutters of Esther's summer house have such lovely lines that I can hardly even bear to repaint them. It will be best to go back to the rainbow colours of 1940 and repaint each panel with a different pale shade. The lighting will do the rest. I have put one of the doors from *Les Parents Terribles*, "the door which bangs," in the wings, and from there it will play its part unseen. It will be heard, and when it is opened a white light will shine out on to the stage. At the end of the Act, Marcel André will go out, having put out all the lights in the room. Nothing is left but the red light of the radiator. Unseen, he opens the invisible door. Yvonne is caught in the cruel light, with her shadow thrown right across the stage, on to the draught-screen. The curtain goes down on the words, "And I want to live".

First performance of *Les Monstres Sacrés* after a hard day's work. Will have been working from nine a.m. till midnight. Except for lunch at the Italian Consulate I shall have been in the theatre all day. The actors are rehearsing. Sewing, draping the costumes and seeing to the lighting arrangements. At 8.30 p.m. Landry came with me to the broadcasting station from which I was speaking. At 9 p.m. changed at the hotel. 9.30 p.m., gave a talk to the audience. 10 o'clock, had some food in Yvonne's dressing room. The public is finding the play amusing, but then the Cairo audience prefers laughing to crying. I am afraid the genius of Yvonne de Bray, which resembles that of Réjane, will escape them. It is too simple and too natural. They were coughing during the whole of the wordless scene at the end of the second act, in which she reaches the very height of perfection. In Cairo, when an actor stops speaking, attention is withdrawn. They like pretty girls and handsome boys. The rest is too much effort.

I was unjust. All the newspapers are speaking of the genius of Yvonne de Bray. From start to finish, the play, easier than the others, more "Parisian", tires them less and pleases them more.

Will the strange poetry which permeates *Léocadia* escape them? I hope Jean Anouilh will forgive me if I give his play a musical comedy flavour.

To-day school matinée of *Britannicus*. The head-mistress of the school which for twenty years has been bringing up young Egyptians to speak French and to love the culture of our country came to see me. *Britannicus* falls in the middle of an examination period, and teachers do not allow their pupils to go to the theatre. The house is, however, already full, but many pupils cannot come.

Papers here, which incline to eulogise where ours would criticise when they speak of me, take up the slogans which are used in France. "Magician, enchanter", and other silly expressions of the French press, set the theme for the Egyptian papers. At home I have always tended to think that the prestige of Paris was exaggerated, and that the other capitals would be more discriminating in their appraisal of our work. When I take my journeys abroad,

I see that under her mockery, insolence and inattention, Paris is discriminating. In fact the unpredictable lack of direction of Paris may be difficult to live in, but it whips one up and does not allow the soul to doze idly. Nietzsche was right. There is a keen tang in the air—salt, pepper, the resounding clap of a smack in the face or of applause. Struggle and contrast. The spirit of contradiction which may be the lowest form of the creative spirit but which is also a breaker of toys and idols and an incentive to remould and to go on remoulding.

Here there is more sugar than salt, more “dust that perisheth” than pepper. I know that these are things that one should not say and that Egyptians are sensitive, but my rôle in life is to say. Yesterday they deleted the following words which were in my talk for broadcasting, “a Frenchman cannot now imagine what peasants wore in the time of Louis XIV. Beside the Nile, men walk clad as of old. No doubt they would like to substitute our ugly garments for theirs, but happily they put off all things until to-morrow”.

No doubt in Egypt everything is at the same time too easy and too far beyond solution. This creates laziness of the mind. Perhaps this needs to be shaken. Yesterday I noticed that by the third act there were more shades of reaction in the auditorium.

19th March, 1949.

Had dinner with Wahid. Had arranged to go to see the Sphinx after dinner. Wahid did not seem enthusiastic. There is a ban on such excursions because the King has had a country house built at the foot of the Cheops Pyramid, of the type referred to in France as a “folly”. Those who belong to the Court are afraid that the King might see them if he suddenly turned up on a surprise visit there. I insisted, however, and Wahid gave in. So we are going to the Sphinx. Stopped at the police station beyond Mena House. Carullo

gave Wahid's name. A detective got in and came with us. "Miss Europe" had had dinner with us. Her lovely face showed disappointment when we came to the stony road. "Where are we going?" "To the Sphinx." "Oh! . . . I misunderstood you."

She thought the "Sphinx" was a night club. She had imagined we were taking her to some place of ill repute.

Last time I saw the Sphinx in 1936, she was surrounded by sand hills. At the foot of the large vat of sand she lay, like a ship in dry dock. At that time, I had said that we were walking on ancient temples. Excavations have since been undertaken and proved me right. Now the outer walls of the temple stand revealed, and it would appear likely that the dark-red Sphinx inhabited a niche, surrounded by ramparts and colonnades.

The car stumbles over large stones, slips, scarcely holds the road and goes down the curve which surrounds the huge, pumice-stone coloured mass. Her presence is felt rather than perceived, more grey and pale than the rest. The car comes to a standstill on the platform of sand, facing the walls of the Temple which hide the strange animal up to her breast. She is seen as Napoleon must have seen her.

The car turns and the head-lamps light up her chest. The well-known body, gently sloping down, covered with stains as of leprosy, remains in the shadow. We come nearer, through corridors open to the sky. Four ill-shaped steps lead down to the fortress of the moulded Roman paws. The moon comes out, yellow and low. I suggest returning to Cairo to fetch Yvonne and Marais from the theatre and returning when the moon is high.

At Cairo we find that they have left the theatre already.

The car then takes us back to Mena House.

Same police station. Same detective who comes with us. Same joltings on the roadway, but the scene has changed.

From the moon, snow falls down. Her snow now covers the cornices of the terrifying "machine". I leave the rest of the party with Dermithe, for we are struck dumb with a holy stupor.

In the sky lies the unharnessed Wain, shafts pointing upwards. Strange stopping place! The Three Wise Men* have struck their tents of stone, stretched from base to point, one side in the shadow and the other three smoothed by the moon. They sleep while their dog lies awake. Their watch dog is the Sphinx. Still . . . lying between the desert, the tents of the royal camping ground and the distant city, she stretches out her paws upon the sand and points her ears to catch the sound of dogs barking in farmyards and the prolonged screeching of vultures.

Kings camp as kings must. At some height. Near water which may be drunk. On the margin of silence.

I am glad this region is closed to tourists and couples. Mosques leave me completely unmoved, but here, where men wrapped in burnous prowl around like scene-shifters around the stage, I am integrated in the play which rises effortlessly before me.

This afternoon I had been to see the mosques with Felix R. There we saw the alabaster tombs of sleeping kings. They sleep: kings, with their wives, their sons and their daughters. And in the porch-way, so that their slumbers should in no way be disturbed, visitors take off their shoes, or if they will not, they slip their noisy soles into linen slippers.

Kings and princes sleep under mournful awnings made of alabaster, marble, turquoise, sapphires and gold. No doubt it is the time of the siesta in a country of fête-days, anniversaries and celebrations of this and that, of all the excuses for doing nothing, lying on the ground, sleeping. The palaces are empty. Empty are the great halls, where, from showers of useless flex, dead lamps hang limp.

Here I fail to feel any presence either divine or human. Emptiness alone is wedded to all the tiny ornamentations, the miniature pottery stalactites of these vaults which seem like Turkish baths of giants long dead. Under the milky light of the moon and stars,

* *Translator's note.* In English we refer to these three stars as "Orion's belt" but this would spoil the whole word picture.

under the sky whose dark slate is pitted with calculations, I thought. What strange tackle, what warp and woof of unknown material, what harp-strings sensitive to who knows what wind, what spiders' webs did these men spin from one world to another, to catch secrets which are impenetrable?

There is here proof enough that they refused to be resigned, and that their insolent will forced the gods into dialogue.

20th March, 1949.

Went this morning to the markets with Carullo and Dermithe. We knew the markets, but I did not know this particular crumbling, dusty road, lined with hovels edged with golden jewels. At the same time the poorest and the richest part of Cairo. The district of drunkards and banks. Here men walk in couples, holding each others' little fingers. Here women are veiled and wear ornaments between their eyes. Here you can see the poise acquired through walking with large dishes or baskets balanced on the top of the head. Here gold-dust sparkles in the air and at night the urchins scrape the dust together, put it through a sieve and sell what they can to the solderer. I bought two thick chains, because I like gold which is only partly refined and is heavy, dull and dusted as with pollen, but even more because I wanted to look at the work of soldering and cleaning. The solderer directs the flame on to the gold with a pipette. He blows on it and the flame throws out a thin tongue. The gold becomes an incandescent mass, after which it looks dirty. Then it is washed in a second booth, in a turquoise blue liquid. After that it is dried in a charcoal fire which is fanned the while. It changes colour and darkens. The workman goes on putting it through successive baths of the turquoise liquid, sand and ash, until it regains its original colour. It is weighed at the Government booth. Then you sign, pay and carry it off.

And now it is Sunday and I am in the theatre. Writing these words I hear the solemn swish of the curtains going up on the matinée of *Les Monstres*. The voice of Yvonne de Bray comes through the microphone as it does on the telephone, harsh, resonant, metallic, round, incisive and warm. In this theatre I now have little to do, but am held by it as a gambler by the gaming table. If I leave it for a moment it seems to me like desertion. This frenzy for work has at length thrown me into a state of fatigue which has something in common with the condition of the athlete. If I rested, I would die.

Waves of Sunday laughter, rather heavy but very living. Religious silence during the scene in which Yvonne de Bray does not speak. She is applauded.

I see by the articles in the Cairo papers that they criticise the acting much more minutely here than with us. In Paris they chop the actors heads off in three lines. If actors are considered good, nothing is said about them. In Cairo half the article is given to them. They are criticised or praised in detail.

Cairo sometimes breaks one's heart. Why? So many, many in rags, such heart-rending contrasts between the richness of the vehicles purring along and the poor who go barefoot. But it is a consolation to think that penury here does not produce as much suffering as it would in France, that there is an easy-going feeling, an ambiance of delight in which the people live and move and have their being—in a way, it gives the feeling produced by the accoutrements of wealth. Gide had warned me of the contrast. He simply could not stand it.

Arab dinner. Came back to the theatre at 9.0 p.m. The show is starting. The evening audience is highly strung, less sensitive than the afternoon one. One point out of four goes home.

To-night after the curtain has gone down for the last time, the two first settings of *Léocadia* will be gone over.

The lighting of *Léocadia* is half-lighting, twilight. *In Camera* is a play of neon lighting. It is necessary to draw attention to the effect of the two types of lighting. Sartre has brought on to the

stage the feeling and the appearance of the bars of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, where the tubes of neon lights throw into relief both faces and souls. Jean Anouilh's characters walk about like slow-motion pictures in an aquarium or an iridescent soap bubble.

Night in the theatre. Beaupaire's décors are not what they should be, they are not like the sketches which he made. Slovenly workmanship. We had to replace everything on the stage with bits and pieces from the Opera. Out of this assemblage there emerges a Second Act décor which is almost wildly magnificent, in the style of Raymond Roussel.

20th March, 1949.

Reception at the *Amitiés Françaises*. Crowded. Photographs and autographs. Grenier took the chair. I had not understood that the *Amitiés Françaises* was a group of people which included Egyptians friendly to France. I thought I was amongst Frenchmen and so the talk was addressed to my own people. I was afraid that I might have put my foot in it, but the Ambassador re-assures me on this score. Tired to the very marrow. Many times I thought while speaking that I would neither be able to finish the sentence, nor find my feet again, nor close the phrases in parenthesis. Yvonne and Jeannot, who came in while I went up on the platform, noticed nothing. But it makes me afraid of what may happen at Alexandria where I have to give an unrehearsed speech for an hour.

I lunched to-day with Dr. Drioton at the Doss's home, which is exquisite and only twenty minutes out of Cairo. He is not like those Egyptologists who love labels. Nor is he literal in his interpretations. He likes to decipher enigmas and is not inimical to our intuitional findings.

What curious language journalists put into the mouths of theatrical people. "Little one," "My children," etc. . . . Expressions

which I never use; as far from the truth as a painter's interpretations of battle scenes. It probably comes from what Paris refers to as "le boulevard".

22nd March, 1949.

Visited the Museum with Dr. Drioton, a jovial person who seems to infuse cheerful life into the necropolis. He slips from one century to another, spares us from looking at minor works and only stops before the masterpieces. The more I walk along, the more I listen, the more I move around the columns, the more do I experience the feeling of a dark world which fastens on to ours and which will not loosen the suckers through which it takes its life. Whatever it may cost, they find it necessary to confirm their existence, to perpetuate themselves, to incarnate, to re-incarnate, to hypnotise nothingness and to vanquish it. Fists closed, eyes wide open and fixed, the Pharoahs march against the void, put it to sleep, braving its powers. For this reason it does not seem a sacrilege to move them to a museum. They have exacted this nominal glory, a glory as of a tragedian in the limelight. They did not hide themselves in order to disappear, but in order to await the cue for their entry on the stage. They have not been dragged from the tomb. They have been brought from the limbo of the wings with masks and gloves made of gold.

Besides, I had proof of this in the room where the mummies lie. It is now closed to the public, but the Doctor opened it with his key. Here they lie side by side in their death, under the windows, in a kind of hospital, where the wounded are sorted out, a morgue where one bends down over the corpses in order to identify the victims. These prodigious men have to the end won the toss from Fate and have continued from effigy to effigy, sloughing and changing their skins. The mania for survival has sculptured the outlines of the leather and bronze faces which seem to threaten us

with closed fists. In the waiting room where the great haughty family lives together, everyone escapes and finds again an honoured place in the museum where some gigantic form gives it permission to be at home, to put on a soul and to cry out, "It is I".

Seti the First! How beautiful he is, with his little nose, his pointed teeth showing, his little face, like that of a human beast of prey, his little face which belongs to death, reduced to one requirement alone—not to die. "I! I! I!" This is the word which the rafters throw back. And the rich dignitary who, from his stela, repeats the attitude of the king, shouts it at the top of his voice. His double, facing him, echoes back the repeated image in which he contemplates himself, with or without a wig, with or without a loin-cloth. On the top of the coffer containing his entrails, the four little faces of Tut-Ankh-Amun look at each other as though the central one were reflected in a triptych mirror, and say "I! I! I!"

Thanks to the Doctor we pass over the crude, uncouth period when women had men's faces, and over the subsequent long period of academic art, to the period influenced by the grace of Thebes when men had the faces of women. Thereafter King Amenophis IV changed the play and its setting. The sun became the only god (that which the sun foreshadows). By his order art became realist, then sur-realist. Portrayal was carried to its limits, till a grandiose folly was reached, when they decided that heads should be lengthened, until at last they hung down like pilgrim's gourds. But from one age to another distortion of effigies is always overshadowed by the necessity of adopting the intra-uterine position and even the Queen's chaise carried by her flunkies made her publicly contract herself like the foetus within the womb or within the egg.

Everywhere death protects itself against evil forces which might detract from its purpose of not being truly dead, of not being engulfed in slumber.

The Egypt which shows its flat road by means of living mile-stones. is only the culmination of a Neolythic Egypt lost to us because she had no writing, and because she carved her flintstones into weapons but into nothing else. We can only guess her outlines through those lay figures of ivory which blaze the trail for the

future to follow. We have seen the costumes and stage setting, here now is the theatre and the stalls full of the accessories from which nothing is lacking:—the Halls of Tut-Ankh-Amun.

We shall be able to imagine the luxury surrounding this young invalid, born of what would now be deemed incest. Everything is there, almost untouched by time:—seats, coffers, rings, ear-rings, false beards, gloves, beds, waggons, walking sticks, clasps and little switches. Everything is new, shining, ready for use. The quality of this shining is held for us still, lambent in the alabaster lotus from which he drank. His chariot still holds for us the black horse caparisoned for his use, the make-up box seems ready to open, full of the kohl for his eyes, and his golden sandals await to shod his royal feet, to take him where he would go.

This young King, be it said again, with his delicate lungs, has gained his point. Centuries have gone, but he holds his audience still.

The effigies of the Pharaohs and the ritualistic nature of the sculpture-work presented difficulties to souls which wished to incarnate in them. Five sculptors all worked at the same time under the directions of a scribe. The master-sculptor did the left side, a pupil did the right. It seems that this made the full face look a little odd, as the left side is always more expressive than the other. It can be well understood that in this lop-sided covering, the soul feels somewhat ill at ease. (I can in no way vouch for this; I am only quoting the Abbé Drioton).

To come back to the Prince. He fills with fear many superstitious Egyptians who touch wood whenever they hear his name.

He gives me no sense of fear. It is even he in person, who leads us on and who helps us to understand the use of things in his reign: how he ate, how he slept without ruffling his head-dress, how he sat down on the throne, how he made up his face, and how he mounted his chariot.

With Tut-Ankh-Amun, we are no longer guided by stelae and drawings. We walk about amongst his slaves, in his house.

Once out of the Museum gateway, Cairo people console us a little for living in a sordid age. A last breath of elegance hangs

around them. No delicate fingers now work for any patron of the arts, but they still seem to hang the sumptuous folds of the materials which clothe this people. Two civilisations touch each other without even being conscious the one of the other—that of the people of Egypt and that of the American cars. This blind man's buff makes of each a ghost for the other. The whole problem of Egypt lies there.

25th March, 1949.

Too much work to write.

Léocadia. The charm of the piece comes over well, and so does Poulenc's music. (Reminiscent of the *White Horse Inn*—as if it had stepped out of a dream).

After the theatre, with Princess Faïza at homes of friends. One goes from house to house until 4 o'clock in the morning, as the custom is in New York. In these surroundings one eats, speaks, drinks and dances on what seems like shifting sand similar to those which swallow kingdoms. No censorship here at all. One says what one likes.

The Princess is very beautiful, very simple and very free. I questioned the Princesses as to whether they feel happier than their mothers and grandmothers. They said that this was not so. That their mothers and grandmothers had no choice, and that unhappiness begins with choice.

Society which falls between two stools. The new liberty of women makes one group live as in Europe, while the other group judges the former severely—the latter live half in obscurity and half in the world. Rather like the upper-ten with us, particularly those amongst them who about 1930 were called "gratin révolté" (the emancipated youth of the upper-ten). I am reminded of the *obiter dictum* of Monsieur d'H, when he heard his daughters speak of their men friends. "In my time women did not have men friends. They only had relations".

26th March, 1949.

The desert road has now been open for a week. We travel through it extremely quickly without being conscious of it, as there are no landmarks on the way. The sky is pale mauve towards the horizon, the desert begins to tell lies like the country near Marseilles. It offers us the mirage of water. It offers us everything it does not have. This goes on and on in such a way that, when one meets Arabs who are never mistaken as to direction, they seem like men in a mirage who may be walking *elsewhere*. I am writing these lines at the Rest House, near Wadi Natrom, a Catholic monastery about 75 miles from Alexandria. This is a halt, an inn where complete rest can be found except on Sundays. We shall arrive in Alexandria in an hour and a quarter. There is a fresh breeze.

Alexandria. I am taking a rest at the hotel. The theatre is full. I am told that 3,000 people were refused seats.

Gave an hour's impromptu talk. Audience very attentive, hall very hot. I got some things said which were very much to the point, others got lost and I lost the thread because some of Soliman Bey's Arab mechanics (he is playing to-night) were gossiping behind a heap of red material which billowed out like the sails of Cleopatra's galleys. This flapping material and the gossiping made me feel on edge. Felt as if I were speaking from a ship to people sitting in the harbour.

There are place names which suit the countries to which they belong. China. Egypt. Names which resemble these countries. China. I can see a heap of rottenness which, when the sun touches it, becomes a nugget of gold.

Egypt! I can see something flat, sideways, shining like the salt flats of Alexandria.

It is a beautiful name which you have, Egypt, which gives itself to your Queen. I can never hear it without being moved within me by the words which Shakespeare puts into the dying Mark Antony's mouth when he says to Cleopatra,

"I am dying, Egypt, dying".

It is strange that I should be telling you of your own riches, but it always seems to me that it needs a stranger to show us the riches of France, and no doubt you forget yours, which custom stales for you, and which you therefore forget or do not see.

About the story of the red light and the chauffeur. It is the poetry of this Arab chauffeur which moves me. We, who call ourselves poets, we think we are putting out the red light, even when it does not happen.

In speaking of a poet, one should not speak of inspiration (as well speak of inhalation), but rather of exhalation, a giving or breathing out. What he finds does not come to him from without, but from within, from the darkness hidden within him, in which he digs deep, as in Egypt they dig, deep in the earth.

This is why the things he finds often seem of as little use to him as they do to others. It is therefore foolish to be astonished at lack of understanding in others, concerning things which the poet often hardly understands himself. It requires a Dr. Drioton to study them and to explain them to us.

Mediterranean people! Why should I be angry when you catch hold of me and hang on to me in the street to sell me your goods, as I do the same when I catch hold of the public in the highway to sell my goods to it, to induce it to give me a hearing and to believe me.

Your dromedaries, Egypt, resemble serpents which have swallowed donkeys—riders, saddles and all.

Gold is sublimated sand. You walk on gold and sand. So I walk on the depths of myself. Often my digging produces what has little worth. But sometimes, with a beating heart, it is the gold I find of a drinking cup like those once raised to the lips of a young invalid, whose name was Tut-Ankh-Amun.

To weld together two phantom worlds which pass each other by and yet transfuse each other, this is the task of Egypt.

Slept at Alexandria. Left at 10 a.m. At the gate of the desert, the red lights are huge bunches of poppies which the street urchins brandish at the roadside.

Inside our car, Big Ben strikes twelve. Lunch at the Rest House. Between the Rest House and Cairo, it rains. Beethoven's Seventh comes along with us. It has come over the sand, through the wind, and now through the sand storm thrown like an avalanche of needles on the window panes. The pyramids pirouette through a game of hide and seek—and then we are back in Cairo in the weather we had before. Sun overcast with mist.

Taha Hussein has dedicated an article in Arabic to me. It seems astonishing that the first and last paragraphs have passed the censor.

"It is permissible to come out of the castle of silence when Jean Cocteau comes to Egypt. Maybe political and social camps remain closed to us, but thanks be to God, we may still find some ease and consolation in pure literature.

.

Whenever will Egypt waken up from her too deep slumbers?"

28th March, 1949.

Enormous amount of work for *La Machine Infernale*. The scenery for the first Act has already been put up. I had quite forgotten the proportions of the décor. Same story as they had with Rouché over Picasso's décor for *Pulcinella*. They told him that the scenery had arrived from the "Opera". He was expecting a furniture van. What he found was a sort of tiny screen folded in four. He asked where the rest was—there was no "rest". When the screen was unfolded on the stage and set up, the whole huge stage was completely filled.

It is exactly the same with the ramparts of Thebes. On the minute streamlined 'practicable' at the back of the stage, four walls and a tower are folded like a book, like a card-castle, like a minia-

ture "Book of the Hours" such as the Duc de Berry loved. We can only wonder if the actors will have room to move about. But when we go down into the auditorium we see that all five actors are moving about with ease.

La Machine Infernale is Bérard's chef-d'oeuvre, a masterpiece consisting of a minimum of lines to suggest everything—a miracle of economy.

I have slightly changed the lighting from what was used on the German tour as it seemed to me to be rather too picturesque.

After the show, I went on adjusting the lights until five in the morning.

Quite useless trying to make the kind people of Cairo understand this way of working. Wahid had arranged an Oriental fancy-dress ball. Meanwhile the company was acting. Mademoiselle Debar astonished me in the rôle of the Sphinx. It is a race: she is finishing herself off in it. Marais is marvellous in the last Act, in the fatal sodium lights which make faces lose their outline and costumes look statuesque.

Fête at Wahid's. We all look as if we were wearing masks except the domestic staff. Came back in full daylight. And the next day

29th March, 1949.

The next day . . . civilities begin all over again. Eleven a.m. at the theatre. Soliman Bey wants to be photographed with the company. Jean Marais, who had disguised himself as a pirate and painted himself black from head to foot, is washing himself at the Semiramis without taking a minute's sleep. He does not turn up. Soliman Bey is frothing at the mouth

At one p.m. cars belonging to Mme de M. take the company off. Enormous lunch round huge tables groaning with eatables,

saucers and all kinds of delicacies. An Ali Baba's cave. At three p.m. I am taken to the "Pyramids Studio" to see a film in Arabic. They film us and I speak to the staff. At five p.m. I am stumbling over myself with sheer fatigue. Madame L. gives me an injection of vitamins. At six p.m. I write inscriptions in volumes of my writings until 8.30 p.m. At the theatre. The "A" series. Another kind of public. Yesterday it was the usual type of audience found in all the capitals. The mysterious public of Paris and London with full pockets and empty heads. Now we contact the real public.

30th March, 1949.

Egypt has no between seasons. Winter and Summer take each others' places with neither Spring nor Autumn to separate them. Neither is there any twilight between day and night. At one time, neither was there any middle class. This middle class is rising and will swallow up the wealthy class. On the one hand there are hangers on to Egyptian Society life (sporting, tennis and golf), on the other hand there are those who hide under their cringing search for tips, a fanatical hatred of strangers. Between the two, the newly rich drive their cars around and fill our theatres. An élite loves France and pretends to see how badly she runs her propaganda (which does not exist).

All this goes on while outside the heavy dust hangs in the air, in a drowsy atmosphere, and in its midst, fat men crowd the café terraces, drink water and have their shoes polished.

31st March, 1949.

It is raining. And they are not making April fools of us. So we shall go to Sakarah. Mme V. is taking us there.

There are two kinds of Egyptologists in this country. The one kind digs into the sand and the other into the spirit. Egypt is the womb of the world. At every step I find this proved. Going into a chapel in Sakarah, I stumbled over the fragment of a Doric column—drum shaped and quite unlike the half columns of the “Maison du Nord”. The Greeks took inspiration from Egypt, but their gods came down to the level of men. In Egypt men rose to be gods. This is what strikes me at Sakarah:—once over the first shock of false stucco constructions and wood work imitations—false doors and false hinges, false logs, false beams and false boats lying side by side—(Arabs are at present unearthing the second one)—curved tubs which the Pharoahs used to go from one sanctuary to another to re-incarnate, disincarnate, climb from one stage to the next, and then to the final stage—this is what strikes me in Sakarah, that it is human, in the human likeness. Low reliefs are not yet made rigid and stylised. Man’s work is copied realistically. Except in the case of foreigners, when an unusual type is found, all the parts of the body—sex organs included—are shown in almost excessive detail. It seems as if a workman now and again introduces himself on the sly into the metamorphoses of princes.

In the Egypt of the Pharoahs everything has significance. It would be childish to take the least stroke for childishness. The workmen hammered out their work under the eye of the scribe, who was versed both in geometry and in the sciences of the mind.

Here it is that the paths of our two types of Egyptologists separate. Drioton, Lauer and Chevrier fight against the ghosts of the past.

Both schools have their dangers. The one is in danger of stopping on the threshold, the other of being enticed into the labyrinthine ways down which initiates invite the merely curious to their doom. Intuition becomes apparent in what concerns the “Golden Number”, in this sense that poets follow without any predetermined method the architecture of numbers while the specialists of the Golden Number try to prove that the symbols born of the occult marriage of the conscious and the unconscious proved things from consciousness alone.

With Jean Philippe Lauer we shall visit the precincts of the Jubilee of Zoser, and we shall see the plan of his drawing as if we were flying above a sort of air-field with hangars and stones of remembrance for dead warriors, while near at hand amidst delicate shapes, a soul with endless forms, has been turned to stone at the very moment when petrification took it by surprise.

Memphis ought to make modern man hang his head with shame. Nothing is left of this proud city. Nothing, that is, but two giant sentinels, one of alabaster and the other of granite, who lie there prone, dead, smiling yet awhile, and one sphinx in alabaster who, there in the sun, digests the entire vanished city.

In Egypt, other Sphinxes are but copies of the Sphinx of Gizeh, who is their ancestor, the only one. She is a red sphinx whose paws and tail have been refashioned by the Romans.

This is the symbol of digestion, the progenitor of the sacrament of the Eucharist, the sacred creature through whom all things are transmuted and flower, the watch-dog which keeps secrets on their way to becoming other secrets, onwards to the secret which no longer is one, as it is known.

From my visit to Sakarah I take away disquietude.

What? These chessmen on a sandy chessboard, these columns of papyrus, these pyramids with their seven steps, these rooms crammed with faces, could all this great machine be nothing but a picture to cheat the eye and the soul, made to the command of an artless King who wanted to take with him into the limbo, kitchens, ministers and slaves. No! As well look upon the curves of an Arab text as so many decorative arabesques. All this is here for the reading. But, alas, I have too little knowledge. Everything confirms that the clue exists. The explanations given to me find me therefore inattentive. For instance, facing the Pyramid of Sneffron, they tell me that the Pharoah had a second pyramid built because the first had not been rightly calculated. Apart from the fact that I can hardly imagine that these symbolic calculators could make a mistake in anything they did, or, if they did, leave proof

of it, I was struck by the interesting shape of the pyramid. And this is what I find in the treatise of Alexander Varille.

“In the first place it is not irrelevant to examine the characteristics of the double pyramid of Dahchon from the point of view of geometric calculations.

We can think of it as composed of two pyramids, where a part of each remains ideal. Taking Perring’s angle measurements as a base—of which he would make a meticulous check-up—it would seem probable that the height of the lower pyramid has the measurements of the apothegm of the higher pyramid. If this were proved, it would be difficult to find a better index of the refinements of calculation which the master of works of Sneffron used for his plans, irrespective of technical difficulties, in order to transfer a symbolic conception into stone. In this way the top of the lower pyramid embodies the ideal, while its elements become a concrete part of the higher pyramid of which the base is ideal”.

An everlasting operation by means of which the abstract becomes the concrete and the void is translated with deep intensity into stone, these are no doubt keys to the enigmas around us.

This key would explain our re-incarnation and the stuff of our body of redemption.

The Pharoahs wish to live whatever it may cost, willy-nilly (not to survive), to live as they did on earth but eternally to translate themselves into the less and less translatable, to vibrate in one extreme gesture, to slip from a court ceremony on a throne in the centre of which all lines cross each other, to be digested and absorbed through a labyrinth of deep-rooted viscera.

In a word, they decide to allow of no static pomp because the universe itself is time and movement. It is to perpetual movement that they aspire.

2nd April, 1949.

At the obsequies of Nockrashym Pasha, the firm of Coca-Cola

was represented by five men dressed in orange coloured garments with "Coca-Cola" written on their chests.

Sumptuous luncheons and dinners follow each other. Taha Hussein's article has shaken University circles. The Professor would like me to call on him on Thursday, the day before we leave for Alexandria. This morning I am going to the college to speak to students.

Yesterday morning I painted murals on the building newly opened by the French Ambassador as the Centre of French Culture. Yves Régner helped me in this work. The design shows a winged creature stretching out its hair on the outstretched fingers of a hand. From the line of the forehead comes the hieroglyph for heaven. Facing it are the Pyramids and the sign for water. Under the hair, which floats out from behind the head, the sign of life—similar in shape to the egg which Piero della Francesca hangs above the Virgin's head. Signed it in Arabic. Back to the hotel covered with ink and plaster.

Spoke to the pupils of the French High School, a pleasant light coloured building. Two thousand pupils—Greeks, Mohammedans and Jews. The behaviour is so perfect that the Jewish pupils feel no constraint and sons of great Egyptian families do not treat them in any way differently from their own friends. I spoke a little in favour of the pupils who do not shine at school. Very warm reception. Refreshments with the masters at the house. Downstairs they are showing coloured reproductions of work by Matisse, Rouault, Vuillard and Bonnard. Not too bad.

At 5 p.m. openings of the French Book section at the Aladdin Bookshop kept by Madame Bauché.

Great enthusiasm at the *matinée* of *La Machine Infernale*. As the audience insisted on seeing me, I went on to the stage. Called back many times. Audience for evening performance very different. They do not seem very enlightened on the subject of *Œdipus*. Nevertheless we are called back five times. The *matinée* finishes at 8.30 p.m., and the evening performance begins at 9.30 p.m. In the long run, spending my life in the wings, I no longer know whether

the performance which is going on is the afternoon or evening one.

At 10 o'clock, party at Prince Hassan's. A crowd standing about drinking whisky like a crowd at a race meeting. Left the party dead tired. Went back to the theatre where they were doing the last act. After the performance, the others dressed for another party at which Worth gowns were being shown off at the Semiramis.

As I have to arrange the lighting to-morrow morning for the plays of Sartre and Feydau, I am off to bed.

Sunday, 3rd April, 1949.

The "idle rich" of Cairo have a harassing life. They talk and eat standing, holding a glass of whisky. In the richest of these houses it is like punting one's way through a crowd in the Underground, an everlasting journey which leads nowhere. One thinks of Sartre's *In Camera*.

To-day we are rehearsing Sartre and we give the first performance at 5 p.m. Shall be interested to see how the public takes this play. Will they laugh or will they feel as I do its almost unbearable discomfort?

The English, being wise, are on the Canal at Suez. They have left in Cairo only a few extremely intelligent men who pretend to be dilettanti, and who go about life with very delicate perception. I should like to see their secret reports.

We gave the play. Enormous success. But for what? They laughed at Sartre's play, they called for the author—Feydeau. What shouts of laughter! *They call for the author...*

In the street. What noise! What sleep! Egypt snores in its sleep.

Monday, 4th April, 1949.

Last night in the Princess F's tent in the desert, we drank too

much. This morning at the hotel they did not waken us. What a scrimmage! It reminds me of the way we went round the world. Dermithe makes me think of Marcel Khill, who had a genius for travelling...

The plane took off at 10 a.m. From above, the desert lives; its veins and arteries link up as they do in the brain.

Pale branchings spread out fabulously and the ghost of a cloud becomes the tree from which the branches sprang.

Like a coral island it lies beneath us, like a circulatory system of yellow blood, through a desert which thinks, swallows up and ruminates over dead cities and the crazy wisdom of man.

And here once more is the serpent, speckled with green and brown, which meanders through Egypt, like a spine carrying the marrow of life. Marrow or aorta, the Nile at its centre gives life to the whole organism.

To the plane overhead, to the car on its roads, the desert gives an over-riding rhythm—so ambles the dromedary.

LUXOR.

It is not warm and we shall be cold during our three days here. I must warn the reader, if he is interested enough to follow me, that these three days will be of the utmost importance to me.

My first impulse, after filling up my form at the hotel will be to pay my respects to the Baron and the Baroness de Lubicz, and to let them know that I am in Luxor. What has been said of them has made me mistrust not them but those who spoke of them. It seemed to me that I could feel through what was said about them, a keenness of angle such as I am always looking for in a world where the downfall of angles makes the mind dully oval.

I had guessed right, Monsieur and Madame de Lubicz have nothing in common with the fancy portrait which is drawn of them. They live in a sort of shanty in the hotel garden in which they and their daughter work day and night. Little by little young Egyptologists have thrown over academic methods and taken up their way of work. Varille, Stoppelaere and Robichon are now trying to

bring to their studies of remains a new way of working which may revolutionise Egyptology. The de Lubicz family are not lost in any dreams and do not have recourse to any magic process. They pick out of the earth, calculate, translate, they cypher and decypher millimetre by millimetre the temple of Luxor.

This family and the adepts who work with them, live more and more in a world which the Pharoahs' wisdom dominated for four thousand years, amidst sand stuffed with architectural pieces, temples built one over the other, layer upon layer, an incredible piling up and mingling, where never a fault is found, or if a fault should seem to be there, then it points the way to a signpost; protocols written down which must be regarded as only the surface of protocols which the word has incarnated from the past.

They did me the honour of showing me their drawings, explaining them to me and giving me proof of what they said. Ordinary politeness forbids me from repeating what I saw or from taking the virginal freshness from the sharp, clean lines which become apparent in their work. But naturally my subsequent visits to the temples, accompanied by Varille, were much affected by what I had seen. Besides, the truth of what they prove stares one in the face. To deny it would be sheer mental dishonesty.

The ages before and during the reign of the Pharoahs unfold themselves under astronomical cycles, those of Gemini, Taurus and Aries—which is that of Alexander.

The last temple of the Pharoahs was built under the sign of Pisces, between the time of the Pharoahs and the Christian era. The Christian era belongs to the sign of Pisces. Our age will come under Aquarius about 2000 A.D.

Our time which lies between Pisces and Aquarius is a time of destruction.

The only temple which can be built in our age on the same principles as the Egyptian ones, is a temple of destruction. The first of these to be built was in America—for the manufacture of atomic bombs. It is perfect, since it is entirely functional, and it has no room for picturesque additions made in the name of

aestheticism. Its priests serve the spirit of destruction, few are allowed into the holy of holies. Certain formulae remain oral. Thousands of slaves work there and none tells the secret he knows, even to his wife. Besides, what do they know? One figure amongst many. A mere nothing. But they remain silent, dominated by the god of fear. A religion of fear and death keeps their mouths closed.

A terrible religion, for whereas great plagues and wars help the world to rid itself of its human encumbrances, the atomic bomb does more, it takes both men and their dwelling places. (They tell me that in Hiroshima this is not quite true, and that there the chrysanthemums grow stronger than they used to do. Good. So the atomic bomb really helps the world which is only trying to free itself from lice).

How can we thank these lay-monks who give their lives to the study of the soil of Egypt, and who are welcoming us, taking us around indefatigably? M. and Madame Chevrier, who are doing excavations at Karnak, M. Stoppelaère and also M. Bruyère, who is digging at Deir-El-Medinah, at the foot of the Theban mountain, will welcome us at their tables and will manage to invent meals for us in their desert station, serving them with angelic patience.

What do these men earn? Very little. They try to get grants, but are refused. They throw themselves into the work body and soul. They go round on the stony paths in open cars which look as if they came out of a car cemetery. Sun, heat, cold, sand-storms, nothing stops them. I take my hat off to them.

But I am a heretic by birth—may I be forgiven. I kneel down before the Lubicz family.

Naturally. Because for thirty years I have striven passionately to solve similar problems amongst the shifting sands of words. For thirty years I have dug deep within myself and tried to decipher myself. For thirty years I have endeavoured to hide my secrets in figurative language destined for those who know how to read. When Varille is explaining a temple to me I seem to hear him telling me about the mechanism of *La Machine Infernale*, saying why I wrote the second act before the first, why I added the third to the other

two, why, a year later, I decided to add the fourth, why from Act to Act I hide the seeds of rebirth, why I place Anubis in Greece in the second Act, and the dead Jocasta in the fourth. A study of this would take up considerable space. And a journal remains a journal or else it risks losing its style. In it I must contradict myself, learn as I go along, leave mistakes as they are and not be ashamed of being for ever a pupil as we all are.

Karnak, the Valley of Kings, Luxor, there is our programme. Alexander Varille will pilot us about everywhere. Yves Régnier who has newly acquired a considerable amount of knowledge, will remain with us till the last day. The 'plane belonging to the club will take him back to Cairo.

I might mention, in passing, that this 'plane which hedge-hopped over the temples where we were, did not shock me. It seems a cross between a scarab and a bird. It can easily be imagined, simplified in character, on a fresco.

On the right hand side of the Avenue of Sphinxes which leads from Luxor to Karnak, they have just brought to light the first male sphinxes with human faces. They face the plinth on which the obelisk of the Place de la Concorde once stood, and the other obelisk of which the plinth is still buried in the sand. The plinth was surrounded by low reliefs of dog-faced baboons in erection. This was not thought to be proper and so the monkeys' organs have been cut off. On the one side there is the empty pedestal and on the other an obelisk with the pedestal still hidden, buried in the ground.

The avenue must continue under the town and take a sharp turn. It is found again in front of the great South gateway of Karnak, but somewhere on the way the sphinxes have become ram-headed as in Alexander's time. Between this row of rams with their serious evil faces reminding us of Amenophis IV, we go down into the frightful chaos of ruins, all that remains of that ant-heap which once was the temple of Karnak.

Chevrier acts as our guide. All around this place, there once flowed sperm (referred to here as "the odour"), the sap, the vital

liquid. It assured the growth of the colonnades and obelisks, the perpetuity of the type of false faults, of buddings or graftings hidden upside down in the foundations and sealed with the royal seal, the obelisks inscribed between the basal curve and the once gilded point, the profiles, hands, knees and toe nails which were moved by twenty millimetres every thousand years, the superimposed texts, the colossi whose scarlet veins travelled through the signs of the sun, the columns with lotus buds, the columns with open corollas on which a hundred men might stand. All this geometric jungle was watered by Min, the god of the power of erection, with the sky-blue organ. Here he is everywhere with his large right shoulder holding the end of a single line which stretches immovably to the ground, the left arm lifted from the elbow upwards holding a hammer or a wand with three streams of water (this later on was to become the rod of Moses). This angle of the royal rod catches the celestial effluvia which escaped from the divine rod, whether it be outstretched to the flowers or fruit on the table of offerings, or whether it streams out above the vessel held by the prince. For the temple of Karnak is a temple of Nature while at Luxor there is the temple of man. "Nature is a temple in which living pillars..." Karnak reverses Baudelaire's theme. The temple is a facet of nature. It germinated, flowered and flourished, the Nile moistened it, its architectural features nourished it with salt and inscribed stones, taken from the masonry of its former buildings. It lived amidst order and it intends to continue to live amidst disorder. It intends to live, with birds flying over it, jackals inhabiting the walls which are caving in, and from which they gaze out at us, pricking up their ears as did Anubis of old. It intends to live, in spite of saltpetre which eats it away and makes it crumble, until the dunes rough-sketch the forms of statues, and the statues return to sand.

In this horrible garden one becomes afraid. The power of the Pharaohs is an insect's power, belonging to a race which lived solely to pursue and which leaves us none of the familiar ways of life. To try to read history into the temples of Egypt is absurd. The teaching which is hidden there, and which is there for all to see, is sacerdotal. Unless we understand that we are face to face

with pre-figured realism, with the science of thought, with art from which individualism is excluded, with a pious lie of savage slave-owners, with a canon which never deviates from figures, unless we understand this, we understand nothing of an era of four thousand years struck down at its height. The pyramid of Cheops is the projectile, the supreme attempt of geometricians and astronomers full of wise weapons suitable for projecting strength or for receiving the divine fire.

Weapons which become two-edged swords. This was made clear to us the next day: we had crossed the Nile in a sailing boat (it was very cold) and we came into the open country in front of the Colossi of Memnon—there they were, scorched and scarred by lightning. Here, thunderstorms are rainless and for century upon century, lightning has streaked from the sky on to these gigantic seated figures. It strikes, beats and reviles them, leaving them disfigured, like a boxer who has slumped into a chair. They are crucified, sitting against great crosses; the lightning has left nothing untouched except their legs. The Colossus to the right is oracular, the statue which sings at sunrise as the first rays touch it, and it is shod with poems in praise of the dawn. On the two unscarred pedestals, hermaphrodite statues of Egypt with hanging breasts, make sailors' knots to bind themselves to each other.

The road leading to the Colossi is protected from the spates of the Nile by a sort of natural rampart. Here a masterpiece was created by Hassan—a village cut out of the hardened mud in which lacey sculpture work is easily made. Here he gives fêtes, but the local people refuse to live there. They love their hillside and make their own holes, dig their own hovels in it. Besides, the architecture of their old houses is charming. We are going there in a prehistoric carriage. We are going to the warlike temple of Rameses III, and we shall lunch with Stoppelaère. Then we shall go from tomb to tomb, ending the journey at the well, 44 yards in circumference, and 44 feet deep, which M. Bruyère is digging in the midst of a solemn amphitheatre of mountains.

The temple of Rameses III with its leaning citadel walls, tells

of his victories and shows us how he punished Jews and negroes.

The King, standing erect in his carriage, with the reins knotted around him like a girdle, drives from his hips. This leaves his hands free to use his bow and arrow. The battle-field is covered with corpses, sex-organs and ears. Rameses III is responsible for one innovation—cutting hieroglyphics deep into the stone. Their indented sides are painted pale blue and pink, so that, while shadow gives them clear-cut black outlines at a distance, near at hand with the sun shining on them, they look like lovely iridescent sea-shells.

Near the temple, the King and his Queens could sleep during the period of festivities in what looks like an inn. There was sleeping accommodation, there were douches, and running water was brought there by brickwork conduits.

We sometimes find in this temple what had already struck me so much at the South gate of the temple of Karnak: legs sculptured beneath the door, then a space with nothing and, above the door, busts appearing again as part of the same person.

It would be much too simple an explanation to say that this was sketchy work or that the sculptors had not completed their carving. In the time of the Pharaohs, Egypt knew the danger of calculations which were accepted too narrowly and the mistake of leaving nothing unproved. She always left an opportunity of going further. Things which seem like sketches or uncompleted work and which are usually classed by people without vision as careless workmanship, are, on the contrary, doors left open by the wisdom of the priests. I should imagine that they were afraid that if their wise serpents were too much constrained they might turn round and sting their own tails or that they might at last be walled up alive by walls of their own making.

A tourist soon tires of the unchanging positions of the gods, goddesses and royal personages. Not to look beyond this deceptive decoration, is to be like a pupil looking up from morning to night at a school board covered by algebraic signs and to think it is a pretty picture. The stones say more than the inscriptions on them and the inscriptions more about static movement than about the story of ritual or of valour in the field.

The octopus-temples twist about, the pachyderm-temples walk, and the colossi move their legs forward, while a slight deviation from complete balance on the left gives them a start in that direction.

I am amazed at having read so much about stylised work, profiles, the strange set of eyes and the rest of the nonsense which only comes out of the Egypt of *Aïda*.

Let us leave these walls where the god Mîn still tightens his hold, while from his loin cloths there issue multi-coloured solar rays. Let us flee to the tombs, to the insects, to the white ants, to the dead who live on.

One wonders how the innumerable accessories of Tut-Ankh-Amun were piled up and packed into the low, tiny underground chamber, how these golden chests were all placed one inside the other round the sarcophagus where the king lies before us under the last of his shells.

The stair which leads to this chamber begins on the road. It was found by chance, after hundreds of useless diggings, because an Arab had gone to sleep there while his dog dug holes in the sand. Had it not been for this Arab and his dog, Tut-Ankh-Amun would still be going on his journeys in his painted cabin, safe in his labyrinthine repository.

Seti the First slept not far from here. The winged and footed serpent whose spine is crossed by effluvia, the heavenly cow which suckles Pharaoh, the cord knotted and again subtly re-knotted, the ship with the ram's head, the straight-eared Anubis, the signs of the Zodiac, stars made of the reversed "Y" crossed through the centre, all this procession of puzzling signs disconcerts us.

I should think that manual dexterity played a great part in the cutting of the halls, as the stone is full of clean cut flint and it is difficult to understand how such work could be done with copper tools only. But all this can be left for the archaeologists and architects to explain, as they are intent on the solution of such problems as those concerning the way in which enormous blocks of stone could be made to fit into each other with the precision of a cigarette case.

It is very likely that the furniture, chariots and jewels which were buried with the prince were not real but were only copied to serve the purposes of the tomb. Probably that is why Tut-Ankh-Amun's jewels came out of their settings and why it took ten years to take them out of his tomb.

Stoppelaère lives amongst the tombs, in a hunting pavilion where he served up an excellent meal in spite of the fact that he has no water which is even fit for cooking. Perhaps I am mixing up our excursions, and putting a visit before this which should have come after it. It does not much matter. Finding gold is what an archaeologist most fears. The Arabs think they are gold diggers and greed turns their heads. But they are treasure hunters. Treasure which they share with those they take around with them. Certainly I have taken away in my pocket a coin of Ptolemy's time. Chevrier gave it to me. And if I become confused about the sequence of our programme, it is because, like the Arabs, I am giddy with the thought of gold—the gold of the Golden Number.

Next morning Alexander Varille came to the hotel to fetch us, and we arrived in a short while at the Temple of Luxor, where the English-looking hotels (style of Mena House) look like annexes of the Temple. This is the Temple of Man. That evening at the house of the Baron and Baroness de Lubicz we were to see the way in which all the parts of the plan of the Temple when placed on the top of an adult human skeleton corresponded in minute detail with the functions of the organs which they represent.

The measure of these things may be felt if we follow the line by which—under the semblance of a crown, a diadem or a joint in the stones—the Egyptians separated the lobes of acquiescence and rejection thanks to which man may question himself and argue. If the foot of a skeleton is made to point left as in walking, it will be seen how an architectural trick has lifted the building from all that is static.

Luxor praises the Creator through His creature of which the Temple is a picture built to smaller scale.

Suddenly, in the hypostyle hall, I was struck dumb. What could



The Statue of a Jockey at Archæological Museum, Athens.

(By courtesy of Greek Government)

that be? High up, on the top of the wall, Rimbaud had carved his name. He carved it, at the height of a man, and now that the Temple is cleared, it shines forth like a sunflower. It blazes out, royal and sunlike, above suspicion, dreadful in its solitude.

We go from one surprise to another. Now the Hall of Birth shows us the Annunciation, the Virgin and the Angel, the Virgin Queen, and the envoy of the gods. The gods? Who are they? Will those who come after us not say some day that our saints and angels were gods? And the story of the Manger with the ox and the ass near by? Egypt in the time of the Pharoahs incarnated certain forces, consecrated certain elements and consequently the animals which expressed these forces and elements. Egypt did not adore the sun, but that which is to be found "behind the sun". That is to say, she was monotheistic.

If the Lubicz family had discovered nothing but the secret of the pattern hidden under the disorderly heap of pavementing in Luxor, this discovery alone would have earned our gratitude.

They had to grasp that these paving stones were part of a gigantic mosaic to which the slightest joints in the stones might be a clue, then find out the significant stones, then at last lay before our eyes the portrait of the young King.

Nothing is missing, neither the trachea, nor the seat of understanding placed between the false beard and the thyroid gland.

And then I think of similar paving stones despised and torn up by archaeologists who were looking for treasures and who were unable to understand that the treasures were on the stones, not beneath them.

We return to Karnak to Robichon who lives in a sort of ex-crescence at the top of a huge enclosure. His windows look down perpendicularly on the one side on the jungle of stone, and on the other on the scene of the great fire of Herodotus. It is there that he is making excavations. He is bringing to light sectional layers of buildings from neolithic times till those of the Christian Church. Here he discovered the monumental blue doorway which had grown by about eight inches in a thousand years

(without being either destroyed or reconstructed) solely on account of the sliding movement of the stones.

To the right of the Southern gateway, beyond the city wall looking towards Luxor, there once stood the pink column which was the statue of Tut-Ankh-Amun's father. Struck down by lightning with his limbs thrown about in all directions, he has left nothing of himself in its original place except the legendary toenails starred with crystal. The base of the statue shows us his first son and his own daughter whom he took as his wife and who became the mother of Tut-Ankh-Amun. It certainly is not warm. The sky of dead turquoise colour looks down at the ruins of these vain men who wanted to reach up to heaven. Dinner at the *Chevriers'* with Mr. Lacau who showed me the Cairo Museum in 1936.

In his studio *Chevrier* keeps five of the colossal effigies of Amenophis IV. When he lets his torch shine on them, they come to life and their eyes, turned to inward contemplation, look at us for a moment. For the first time this prince broke the seemingly eternal rhythm and instead of changing the set of lines by a hair's breadth, he gave them a heavy blow. His likeness repeated everywhere comes out of the inner nature of its resemblance to him, not a difference to other persons but true likeness which requires no proof and which stands out enormously in relief, in contrast to the setting from which it sprang. What a modern household (in the eternal sense of the word) they must have seemed, like a young Hollywood couple, this Akhenaton and his Princess Nefertiti. She was so ravishing, so full of life, slim, tall and gay; he was heavy in the chest and hips, his sensuous mouth was the same width as his long, thin chin, on which he wore a false beard, and his eyes spread across the full width of the temples. One dare not think of the inner history of the reign. But now they are apart, he with the Abbé *Drioton* and de *Chevrier*, she in the American zone of Berlin. It is in order.

The last evening we dined at the de *Lubicz'* home, and saw there the marvellous things which I have chronicled above and the

drawings in which their daughter, vestal virgin of the temples, finds out the tiniest signs and the ghosts of ancient colours.

The Baron and Varille drove us to the station and we found Chevrier again on his way to Cairo in a berth in the sleeping car near ours.

Cold night. Arrived at Cairo at 8 a.m. and went straight to the Continental. Put my notes in order. At 5 p.m. I spoke to the Faculty in the presence of the Professor, the Director of French Studies, and the students. In the evening last show of the season: Sartre and Feydeau. After the theatre, farewell night at the home of Wahid-El-Dine.

I am sorry that our short visit did not allow of an excursion to Asswan, although Asswan is only country landscape, and it needs sunshine. I should have liked to have stood there and guessed at the hidden presence of the Temple of Philae under the waters which protect it and lick its wounds free of the saltpetre which caused them. I should have liked to have seen with my mind's eye the black rock at its base and its island shaped like a bird, hatching out its eggs. I should have liked to have prayed that it might not be demolished nor taken away elsewhere.

It seems as if the dictatorial system which the Pharaohs instituted in Egypt managed at last to copy and to embody (to impose by strategy) a collective working system like that of the ants, termites or bees. It is not yet known whether in the case of insects there may not be a minority working at the centre who exercise power over the simple minded extrovert majority. One thing is certain, that the general appearance of the remains—except for the fact that they have some qualities of works of art—amaze us no more than the pallid architecture of hives, the grey fortresses of termites, or the necropoli and dark labyrinths of ants. A policy which was based on the altruism of the many, subservient to a dominant egoism, no doubt imposes laws as strange as degurgitation, caresses with antennæ or the nuptial flight of bees. It is impossible to visit Sakarah, Luxor, Karnak, and the Valley of the Kings without being immediately aware of the similarity between the mechanistic nature

of the Pharoahs' rule and those of insects. I should not be filled with surprise if I were told that their slaves had organs which could be made to secrete gold or that they could bring about the birth of so many geometricians or astronomers at will. At every step individualistic disorder such as ours is refuted, and when we are suddenly faced with the effigies of Amenophis IV we are perplexed, as we might well be if we saw an ant suddenly change the pattern of an ant-heap, or a white ant go mad.

In the wearing down of type and posture into a single pattern, is there not the will to be an insect people, rather than a race of individuals, in which each unit cultivates its own uniqueness? In the arsenal of the Princes, are not the wings, wing-sheaths, and probosces felt to be more necessary than decorative? To sum up, while Greece expresses a tangible ideal through the use of numbers, did not numbers in Egypt prevail against any ideal whatever and was not necessity mistress over all else? This is why Greece speaks to us and Egypt raises up the wall of a dreadful silence. For nothing in it is free, but it is difficult to put one's finger on the cause of constraint. Was it a social or religious order, was it imposed in the service of all or of the few? . . .

Anyone who visits these dead cities and who views them as a whole, must feel himself to be at the centre of a collection of cells similar to those which compose our bodies and whose frightful plan consists in working in the service of the brain alone.

It is true that this brain, which is nourished by the entire entity, performs its work outside the system and in a sense to destroy it, whereas the system of the Pharoahs seems to perform its work within the system and in order to perfect it. When one takes down one of these nests (tree-nests) one seems to be handling some strange work of art which is complicated, baroque, tiny, entrancing and to which the only approximations otherwise to be found are certain prehistoric bone formations perforated and chiselled by the work of millions of years. (*Life of the Ant. Maeterlinck*). . . Would not a giant say the same thing if he held an Egyptian temple in his hand?

Are we studying ant-heaps or Egypt?

April, 1949.

Here we are in the air again. This machine seems very like a product of the civilisation of the Pharoahs. Yvonne, Gabrielle and Jeannot have gone by the desert road. Mme de M. sent someone to drive us to the air station. I chose the air in order to verify the words of Marc Pourpe concerning the hieroglyphics of the Nile and the Pyramids. But, alas, the pilot is avoiding the Pyramids.

In future I shall hire a plane and go to see what I want. . . But here beneath me is something really amazing. Below, in the marshy sands . . . I can hardly believe it . . . what can it be? The spiral formations of the red crown! Marvellously drawn by some sort of geological formation, drawn on the earth several times, immense and perfect on an area of about a mile.

But how did they see it in ancient times? And they must have seen it.

Alexandria. . . Wind from the open spaces, luxurious strongholds of the far-famed yellow jetty which sweeps out to the break-water where the Lighthouse once stood.

The Consul took me to see the Governor and Mustapha Fahmy Pasha, to whom I spoke of the film which I wished to make at Luxor.

Relaxation. But as for Elizabeth, she is working up to the edge of her strength. The décors are not suitable for the type of stage here. The acoustics are excruciating. The stage hands are clumsy and there are too few of them.

Success of *Les Parents Terribles*. Two wires. One from Mnouchkine and one from Lulu Wattier to let me know that *Les Parents Terribles* has won the Femina "Grand Prix" and Gabrielle Dorziat the prize for her acting in it and for her elegance.

All these little items of touring company news are told from the twists and turns of the galleries on either side of the stage. From our dressing rooms we can see each other and the show going on all at the same time. Back stage it looks like Sing-Sing or Big House rather than a theatre. And it really is a prison from which

the actors escape and rush to the beach to bathe. To-night, during *Léocadia*, I have taken up my note-book again. *Les Parents Terribles* at the matinées, followed by *Léocadia* at night—it is really rather too much. The stage hands upset the décors and the performance. But the Alexandria audience is very understanding. They can see what is happening and do not blame us for the hitches. I can hear them laughing and clapping vociferously.

The attitude of mind of Alexandria critics is very odd. They judge all works of art as if they were freshly written, even when such works have become classics and recognised for what they are worth. *Les Parents Terribles* gets the same criticism which it did when it was first written when the critics misunderstood its real meaning.

The public, however, showed enthusiasm. In fact, it was the same old story all over again.

Spoke to the pupils at the Boys' College. Reception given by the masters.

The Mohamed Aly Theatre in which we are playing is not a theatre. It is a sound-box with no acoustics whatever, and without any mechanism for arranging or changing stage settings. It seems to me that a city like Alexandria, full of the luxuries of life, owes itself a better theatre.

Work in Alexandria has been so harassing that I have not been able to find a single minute to write my notes from day to day. The stage-floor at the Mohamed Aly Theatre is a flat table on which everything has to be set up and nailed down where it stands, by stage hands who know no French.

We no longer go to bed at all, and in the afternoon we are still shifting the lighting about in the half dark.

People of importance in Alexandria do not know and must not even be allowed to suspect the kind of hell we have gone through. They invite us everywhere and are astonished when we refuse. We are putting on, by means of bits and pieces, the most exacting plays which demand perfect work behind the scenes.

I managed to take up these notes again in my box during the second act of *Britannicus*. (School children's matinée). The curtains won't go up. They are hammering and hammering . . . The actors are getting nervy.

Britannicus was done marvellously to-night. The matinée had been a great success. At night an accumulation of seemingly unimportant things produced the finest atmosphere for the play. A mixture of stillness and highly strung nerves gives weight and balance to the voices, gestures and carriage of the actors.

Reception at the Consul's. The women are very beautiful and very elegant. Between Cairo and Alexandria there is a sort of battle for prestige.

15th April, 1949.

(During the First Performance of *La Machine Infernale*
at Alexandria).

The actors of our company are playing with extraordinary brio. Oedipus and Destiny no longer come together slowly. Perhaps the tempo changes with the public. Everywhere the feelings of the audience and of the actors must come to grips, subdue each other, eddy around and intermingle. It seems to me to-night that the audience allow themselves to be conquered and to form a whole with those on the stage.

One o'clock in the morning. Very fine evening performance. The audience was held spellbound until the end. They rose to their feet and cheered the actors. As they called for me, I went on the stage to acknowledge their acclamation. They called us back again and again.

I was glad for the company and for the Consul who came into the wings to thank us.

We went out with the stage hands at their invitation. They told stories of "Goa, the simple-hearted" in Arabic. They were smoking hashish and laughing. Their laughing made us laugh. They would not let us spend a single penny. As soon as one is a guest all question of tips ceases.

Saturday, 16th April, 1949.

Lunch at the Consulate. The Consular representative from America said to me, "Mr. Filliol is a wonderful Consul. Nothing that you could say about him in France could make them sufficiently aware of what he has done for your country".

Arrived at the theatre where everything was upside down. Matinée of *Léocadia* at 4 p.m. Still hammering and hammering. At 6 o'clock I am speaking at the "Atelier" on the subject of films while the others arrange the lighting for the plays of Sartre and Feydeau.

After that I am going to look on while the others act.

After the show, evening at the home of Madame Vassili Pasha.

While I am writing I can hear the tremendous applause for *Léocadia*.

Spoke at the "Atelier". I spoke at length about films in Egypt and the mysterious sabotage of French films. Where does this sabotage come from? I am always faced with a stone wall when I start to make enquiries. In order to find the answer, one would have to risk blundering in every kind of way, and nobody here dares to do so.

This evening we gave Sartre and *Léonie est en avance* to a full house. They seemed to understand Feydeau much better than Sartre. Sumptuous and very friendly entertainment at the house of Madame Vassili Pasha. Horribly tired. To-morrow we give *La Machine Infernale* and Sartre. The last performance at Alexandria.

17th April, 1949.

Sunday. Sunshine. Rushing about. Cocktail parties and Easter luncheon at the Baroness C's.

At the evening performance I came as usual in front of the curtain to say good-bye to the audience. I might have said: "See to it that your yellow houses built in rows looking on to the sea do not become golden sarcophagi. See to it that your wealth does not embalm you alive with your servants and your kitchens".

"See to it that you do not keep your ears full of cotton wool"... But I only spoke of Sartre and Feydeau, thanked the audience and gave them my best wishes for a real theatre. Behind the Sartre décor, Elizabeth Prévost was trying to get some sleep on the sofa lent by Jansen for *Les Monstres*. It is 11 p.m. The sofa is drifting between the thunder producing contraption for *La Machine Infernale* and the pink pyramid for *Léocadia*. Elizabeth vaguely opens her eyes. Someone brings her a cup of "morning coffee". One wonders by what miracle these immense wreckages of the décor will go into cases and be sent off to-morrow.

Evening at the Greek Casino. Dancing. The men hold each other's shoulders and look down at their feet while doing complicated steps. From time to time they spring into the air and fling the right foot straight out.

Monday. Marchal, rector of the French Boys' College, Lefèvre Portalis and their wives took me out to the desert to have lunch. There had been a storm and it was still cold. In the evening, I went back to the Komkabar which I had seen in 1936. The women's quarters had been destroyed. Police cars doing round-ups amongst depressing shadows in which cholera and small-pox live together in gloomy company. Went back to the Hotel, feeling rather sad.

Storm. My icy bedroom is nothing but one long draught. Waves and wind add to the uproar. The hotel seems in danger of flying off like the hut in the "Gold Rush". The shutters bang. The windows tremble. We are afraid of having to wait here longer than we should, past the time when our season is finished. Received an

Arab chief's costume from Cairo from Mme M. The hood will be useful as a muffler. We are all freezing.

Wednesday. The storm is doing its worst, and as neither windows nor doors ever close in Alexandria, our rooms appear to be riding the wind, then they explode, and at night we feel that at any moment we shall leave our moorings and go out to sea in tatters.

The Alexandrians hang on to their scaffolding. There is nowhere else to go. No open country, no place to flee to. They live with their houses one above the other like passengers on a ship, on which the different classes live their separate lives, and even those in adjoining cabins do not speak to each other because of some feud or unpleasantness.

The storm keeps us from leaving. A delayed departure is always wretched. In theory we have already left and our ghosts linger behind.

I am sorry that we are not giving any plays in Greece. In the end one comes to love a city of blonde ruins, of delicate pepper-trees, in which sky and earth exchange their gods and demi-gods.

From Egypt I am taking away gratitude for invariable hospitality, and regret that I am not an Egyptologist, as this would rid me of the insoluble problems which ravage the present day world.

Saturday. The ship (*Mohamed Aly*) is late in starting. As our luggage has left the hotel, we have followed it, but once on board we find that we have to stay where we are. A 'phone call to Fahmy Pasha sets us free. To add to the joys of bronchitis I now have boils again. The Alexandria doctor gives me injections of penicillin. Greek dinner. Delicious resinous wine. Fish with honey. Went back to the harbour with Yvonne. Here the endless discussions begin with the Arab police. Under the pretext that there are no women officers to search Yvonne they won't let us in. After an hour's discussion, we try another gate. Our papers pass from hand to hand. At last a police officer seems to understand and we are allowed in.

This morning the penicillin is doing its worst. Everything looks unsteady and I move around in a state of vague fear, half giddy all the time. During lunch the boat leaves. The sea is calm, sparkling, of a china blue only to be found at this point near Alexandria. Am going from deck to deck and from chair to chair. My bodily discomfort does not in the least go with the sunshine, with the sea clear as blue eyes, with the bathing pool, with the deck chairs, with the company which is having a good time bathing and playing games. I can't share in the holiday spirit. I am like a black spot on it, and if I don't walk about the black spot seems to spread into a pool and I feel as if I am spoiling life for the others.

The doctor gives me an injection at 3 p.m., 6 p.m., 9 p.m. and so on. So I shall have to lay in a stock of penicillin at Beirut where we put into port for a day.

A sick person inconveniences people who are well. He no longer understands them, nor they him. I cannot even manage to set going the good humoured approach to others with which I systematically hide my feeling of loneliness. After a few vain attempts at meeting others, I hide myself away and start writing these notes.

Poor Egypt! She's growing distant now, with her two cities as far from each other as two countries, and her water scarcity, and her Coca-Cola.

Perhaps the best régime for her was that of the Pharoahs, rather like the present-day Russian régime. Otherwise she may dissolve, or crumble away into her damp heat and her dust.

She is going from us, Egypt with her great wide eyes. Nothing is left of her on the ship but the ladies sitting with their hands on their knees (their permanently-waved hair like the ancient head-dress of Egypt), and this sea the colour of the god Min.

25th April, 1949.

3 a.m. Impossible to sleep between the injections. Absolute

silence except for the strong low rumble which eliminates other sounds better than silence. The ship lies still. It seems as if it no longer moves but the sea slips under its prow, the engines send a tremulous movement through it, like dancers in Haarlem, like the sleeper in the bunk above me who seems to be trembling.

I feel better. But penicillin gives a feeling of vague sadness. Although I am not depressed by the idea of ageing and although I accept the little shames of growing old, I feel for the first time something more mournful than resignation. I am going over my world tour of 1936. I thought I was old then, but I was young. Now there is no doubt. My system no longer feels in tune with this old but eternally young sea, with nights of adventure, with a too late meeting with Constantinople which I should have liked to have known when I was 19 years of age. I begin to understand Loti's complaints which I used to find ridiculous. I wonder whether my indifference to old age will last or whether I too shall be ridiculous one day.

7 a.m.

Will power and the strange resources of nature produce certain results. I have had my bath and am dressed and ready before anyone else. Yet I had no sleep all night. And here I am as I was at 19—the age which I was so foolishly regretting—since at that age I was always uncomfortable in my soul and inside my skin.

We shall reach Beirut at 8 a.m. I wonder if I should go on with the penicillin. The ship's doctor forgets about me and I have to waken him up every three hours, as otherwise he sleeps on. At all costs I must avoid a boil on my nose! As long as I can avoid that, I swear that I shall not make a fuss about anything else. What an odd type of poet and what an odd type of hero! It is important that I should go on, go on as if the plays, receptions, visits to the Embassies were what I really cared about. Never let my friends think that I am tired. Never appear different from others. Act as those do who believe in what they do—and to crown all, believe in it all at last myself.

The *Mohammed Ali-El Kebir* has reached Beirut. The usual appearance of a boat which does not move. At the moment a traveller who arrives by sea is treated, or rather ill-treated, as a suspicious person. The ship is a prison, difficult to get in and out of. The Secretary from the Legation came on deck and made things easier for us. But in spite of him passports disappear, come apart, are mixed up and lost. Apart from this, the change of scene has an adverse effect on the Company and paralyses it. Tania Balachova, who is trying to tame an Egyptian chameleon, put it down on the deck. The chameleon stepped forward, gently moving its little paws. It ambled along. Marcel André, who was standing on a case, came down from it solemnly, very nobly, right on top of the poor thing. Screams. He lifted his foot as he does in the *Machine* and stepped right on to Balachova's scarf. She became pale as death, like Jocasta. By a miracle the chameleon went back into shape and regained the use of its paws, its colour and the harsh material of which it is made, similar to the fortresses which little boys find in their boxes of soldiers. Marcel André went off in the sulks. The chameleon incident was an addition to the other unpleasant features of leaving the boat. I shall look forward to the time when Tania, who is now afraid of what we may do to her chameleon, will lose it in some Beirut garden, as I did my Japanese grasshopper, when I gave it its freedom in a Los Angeles field in 1936.

The Legation car has taken us to the Hotel St. Georges, where the little beach looks like a sewer. Gaby Sylvia, Elizabeth and Lombroso are bathing. I notice that the gentlemen sitting at the tables nearby look very amused at us. Same thing as in the Alexandria Hotels. Business men versus 'artistes', in fact, provincial minds.

Charming lunch at the Ms'. They are doing duty for the Minister who is presenting a trophy to skiers in the hills. The skiers have plenty of snow, but nothing to help them up the mountain side.

After lunch we are taken to the Residency, where the grounds consist of a race course. There is a race in which the horses are pure blood Arabs. It is all marvellously luxurious and delightful.

In the East, they do not quarrel about party politics as much as they do about religion, and money poisons everything. They will not let *Les Parents Terribles* through because of the Jesuits. Once outside Beirut, the luscious outdoor scenery (green lawns, orange coloured sand and umbrella pines, up to the snows, and the meandering roads similar to the Route des Alpes) is all astonishingly like French scenery. It is a great pity that our culture is losing face here and that French films are no longer shown in the Lebanon. It would be so easy to fraternise with such an open-minded people which is so like our own. Alas, our Government despises films and, in the Middle-East, French people are apt to run down everything which comes from their home country. America, England and Italy rule the roost. Things of the mind were the only ones in which we could really have competed with others, but now we have lost our opportunity, as we have let the supremacy we might have had pass to others.

Spoke on the radio. Back on the steamer at 10 p.m. Went to sleep without knowing when the *Mohammed Ali* left. Noon. Sun-bathing. We are going along the shore of Cyprus which is never-ending. The weather is ideal. Sun and a fresh breeze. Calm sea.

The open carriages of Paris, the London cabs, the gondolas of Venice, the caiques of the Bosphorus, the rickshaws of Shanghai . . . the big American cars have crushed out of existence all these charmingly individual conveyances, as if a smoothing iron had gone over them. We are astride two worlds. Sitting between two chairs. We have become like those who used to say that they had "seen Rachel act". Who amongst the young people around me has seen Greta Garbo act? Deep down I am glad I did not see Constantinople long ago. I shall see it with fresh eyes and shall not have to say "If you had seen Constantinople! . . ."

I should think that now that Constantinople has become Istanbul, it must be very beautiful. It must be more invisible. Amongst his other qualities Bérard had the genius of discovering the beauty of an ugly town. Women like Yvonne or Colette get wrinkles, but their eyes shine and lighten their whole faces. Eyes

are the water of a face and the Bosphorus must be like such eyes. The name of Constantinople gives the impression of a massive golden and silver hinge linking the East to the West, flint needles, carpets and white hands skimming the water's face.

26th April, 1949.

Last night I could not sleep. Lying on the top of my bunk, I listened to the engines. A sort of noisy silence in which snatches of speech, of the dance band, or of a violin, mingle and drown. A wireless must be on somewhere, or a neighbour is talking to herself almost inaudibly. Suddenly the ghosts of music and of speech become silent. The mirage disappears and reappears. Through the portholes, there is a procession of steep rocks. I find myself in the midst of thoughts which are strangers to my mind, without any connection with previous ones, without knowing where they come from nor why I think them. I am not sleeping. I am not dreaming. My brain is working very quickly but takes false turnings. Shreds of music float about in the wind which blows nowhere. I prick up my ears: my neighbour is laughing, sobbing. It isn't true. Elizabeth and Gaby are sleeping. Their silence comes through the partition which separates our cabins. The engines shake the silence into music, and they shake me. "October dedication". What does that mean? That's what I think when the sun breaks through, climbs the sky, comes back as if it had forgotten something in my cabin and turns everything upside down without a thought for those who are sleeping. It is not because mine is the disorder of a man who can't undo his luggage. It is the disorder of a fire, of a wreckage, and once the cabin has been pillaged, the pale mad sun goes away. Besides I was not sleeping. I was thinking the phrases of an idiot, and when this pale dishevelled madman invaded the room he took me unawares. It's my fault. I should have covered up the portholes with rugs, particularly as men are washing the decks, passing

backwards and forwards, and they can see the depths of my disorder and perhaps they can even hear the phantom music and the idiotic sentences which run through my brain. What a strange night! What a strange dawn! And what about Rhodes passing by, with its houses which are re-painted every Sunday. I've missed Rhodes, and there is nothing to be seen but steep rocks reflected in the imitation clocks of the cabin, rocks and the shadows of the black men washing the deck and getting angry with each other. My God! how I should love to sleep. Perhaps I have slept. I don't think so, and yet time on the imitation clocks moves fast. They can't be playing ping-pong at night, yet I can hear the frightful little dry noise of the ping-pong balls outside my door. The noise of bones. A nasty noise of bones which starts jumping about, then the ghost of a hand picks up the balls in front of the open shutters of my door. What am I doing in this tub? Why am I hauling around immense décor and twenty-two actors to visit towns which are sleeping on their feet and which we waken for a moment with sentences out of another world than theirs; and why come to Egypt and Turkey when it might have been Spain, Brazil, Sweden or Norway, and, my God, why give oneself so much trouble and come so far to see unknown people clapping their front paws?

Yesterday was wild, and understandable; it reminded me of days at Maison-Lafitte when the whole family stayed at home because of a storm, and when some played chamber music while others knitted, smoked pipes, played billiards or cards. Passengers get off at Beirut. There is practically no one left on board except our company; we feel on board a ghost ship which has emerged from Atlantic storms and which resembles the ship of the "Grand Large". At night an idiotic film in which Ingrid Bergman as a nun and Bing Crosby as a clergyman, both of them great actors, drown in a swamp of moral purity.

As nothing can ever be done now to save this poor world, it is just as well to take refuge in one's own home. Always the same nonsensical sentences such as "Europe must save itself by itself. It must have a strong army". What do they mean? Who is lost and who is saved? Save oneself, and to what purpose?

Yesterday, saw a French paper with some sentences of Jean Genet. At last some freshness, something with a tang in it, something proud in contrast with the prevalent disgusting type of purity, of poisonous sophistry, which is the pretentious idiocy of our times.

They want Genet to be quiet. But to say "be quiet", they have to speak of him, and so draw attention to him.

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The decadents! Decadent art. Mallarmé said:—

J'ai mal à la dent
D'être decadent.

Decadence is the supreme moment when a civilisation becomes exquisite.

Police. To oblige a Mediterranean people, who are born to gesticulation and argument, to repeat a dreary monologue is a crime against nature.

In the end one comes to believe that the word "decadent" which was glorified by Baudelaire, is an insult. They dare to say that France has come to an end because she likes conversation. They think that a country which rises to its feet to make speeches is getting onto its feet again. But what does that mean:—"getting onto one's feet", "to be decadent", modern jargon which does not stand up to close examination. Life is lived in rich disorder. People pretend that they are living in disciplined poverty. If wealth were the sign of recovery, then I would agree that there could be proof of a nation going down or recovering. But it is ruin which saves a people. Wealth makes no one recover, as far as I know, in the sense in which we wish them to recover, we who are so-called "decadents".

The ship's captain took us down into the bowels of the *Mohammed Ali-El Kebir*. Guts of dull silver (like the silver paper round *marrons glacés*), such a high powered organism, so huge, in

so many parts, so clean, so inextricably inter-dependent that it is difficult to believe that every tiniest part has its use. The beauty of all these organs—belly, lungs, kidneys, intestines and heart—these organs through which we are walking, is that everything is absolutely necessary and that nothing makes an effort to please. Seven engineers and four mechanics are enough to control and look after this tangle of parts which make the 55 foot propeller shaft covered in oil revolve smoothly.

Up in my cabin, where I have to close my cases in readiness for to-morrow, the deep rumble from below strikes me as disquieting. I find difficulty in believing that I have just come from the place from which it issues, and that this place is in our ship. That place seems too high, too vast to be on board. It seems to have its being elsewhere.

So do we forget our viscera, and so are we afraid when something unusual brings them to our notice.

Our arrival in Istanbul took place in cold and fog. Everything goes very fast. Dolphins. The Consul, theatre managers, journalists, photographers climbed on board with bouquets. Polite customs officials. I wrote to the hotel overlooking the Bosphorus.

Here is the city of which I dreamed when I was 19 years of age because of all the accounts of it given by French writers, especially Nerval. Here is this primadonna of a city covered with fame and jewels. I look at her from my window. Here is another creature who refuses to speak of her age and of her past. She is always young. She has changed her name. She is coming out as a *débûtante*. This is the recurring theme of the towns we pass through. But the Turkish *tarboosh*, which the Turks wear in Egypt, is not worn here by the Turks of Istanbul. Here they wear by law a soft turned-up hat which makes it impossible for them to touch the ground with their foreheads in prayer. The *narghileh* is still used, but with the national dress it looks like a stomach pump. . . . Survivals:—the *narghileh*, some charming little houses, little boats on the Bosphorus and the minarets which will soon be replaced by factory chimneys. As was foreseen, the Bosphorus keeps its beauti-

ful big blue eyes wide open in its old and celebrated face which has now been lifted by Elizabeth Arden, by America. The sun is rising. When the wind blows from the South everyone becomes nervy. In the reign of the Empress Theodora, the South wind was regarded as an extenuating circumstance in any crime. Indeed, when it blew, the magistrates did not sit.

Saturday, 30th.

We gave *Les Parents Terribles* to a full house which was like a first-night in Paris. At the end of the second act the stage was heaped up with baskets of flowers beribboned with the French colours.

Before the curtain went up, I had introduced the members of the company who stood side by side like Aunt Sallies at a fair. I thanked the papers for understanding that we were not really a theatrical company, but rather a collection of friends who came to play works which they enjoyed, before another collection of friends whom they did not yet know. I felt I could speak freely and that there was an immediate response. The hall is a rather forbidding one: it is very wide, long, inhuman, and the acoustics are very uneven. The audience filled it up and made the actors so much at home that their faces and voices drew nearer.

This morning I wished to go to Eyoub. As we came in through the Bosphorus, I noticed the house where Loti lived and also the other one to which Anna de Noailles was brought as a little girl by the Princess de Brancovan. Far from France, we are moved by such things. In Paris, which respects no one, they would be made fun of. Pierre Loti and Anna de Noailles have been thrown on the scrap heap. It's a great mistake. The Turks remember them. Loti's faint aroma, submerged by the revolution, now rises again and is felt like sweet scent on the cemetery hill. Loti is honoured at Eyoub as Alphonse Daudet is at Tarascon. The little café, the

wooden hut, the "isba" (everything is Russian here, both isba and trappings) where Loti came to drink raki and eat yoghurt sandwiches, all remain untouched above the level of reformatations and new factories.

"Piyer Loti—Kir-Gazinosu". Above the tombs, the factories and the lovely meanderings of the Golden Horn, the little eyrie bears an inscription with this strange spelling. But the tombs don't stop at the foot of the hill—don't you believe it! These are only the springs from which the stream of tombs arise which cover the whole town. The mosques are tombs, the public buildings are tombs, and the gardens also are tombs and Istanbul is a cemetery full of tombs where the living, according to Mohammedan fashion, live and eat on tombs.

What struck me most in the courtyard of the Eyoub mosque, was a gigantic Byzantium plane-tree, full of nests where herons breed and from which pigeons cover the ground with their droppings. The tree is hollow and the hole in it makes a sort of cavern which has been fitted with a red door. There any injured or sick herons are enclosed and cared for. Cats come here and play about at the foot of the tree. Old women, wrapped up in black, wring the necks of cocks which they carry by their claws strung together. Until the moment they are killed the cocks try to pick up grain dropped by the pigeons on to the courtyard tiles. These old women crouch down and when they rise up awkwardly one thinks at first that they must have been passing water, but it is cock's blood which wets the tiles. When I knew Loti he was very like one of the herons which we see in the tree. Balanced on his Louis XV heels, his nose covered with rice powder and his eyes looking rather like the buttons on his little boots.

What a journey up to his eyrie. The car refuses to go further. For the last ten minutes it has been climbing roads which no one should go up but a donkey. We are knocking against barrows of oranges and onions. Arabs would be screaming and threatening. The Turks display no anger. Everyone gives the chauffeur advice.

It is so difficult to get along that discussions sound more as if they came from players excited over a difficult move. We get out of the passage ways as the result of group deliberations. The hill, however, with its cobbles and steep inclines, is too much for the car, which stops dead after a few shakes and hiccups.

We continue the climb on foot between the tombstones and a few cypresses left standing by the soldiers who came here in 1914. The tombstones lean drunkenly on one side, shoved over in all directions, like clothes-stands holding up a stone turban, a stone fez, stone flowers for the ladies, and more complicated headdresses for the eunuchs.

Charming Loti! I can imagine him skipping down this rocky hill-side looking like a painted china goat. With his little tight corsets, his little high heeled shoes, his little painted face, his large moustache, his fixed eyes, I can hardly see him meeting his Azyadé who was as ambiguous as Proust's young girls. But after all, are not these young girls full of the same charm as Calderon's caricatures of horsemen? From so much dreaming, effort and moving intercourse, there remains nothing but a graceful platform from which we can gaze down at the most fabled failure of human effort. It is impossible to understand it all. A piled up mass of empires, glamorous luxury, massacres, conquests, strongholds of vainglory destroyed by earthquakes, a labyrinth of races and beliefs, lust of possession, of destruction and contrariness, of tombs, tombs, tombs . . . all these combine to form an inextricable ampitheatre of boxes and chandeliers where dead centuries pile up in front of a proscaenium of water.

To-night when we have passed the bazaar which never closes, through whose archways the inhabitants get lost, through which from time to time, the sun shines slantwise, making the moats into a pillar of agate,* we skirt the five mile wall of Byzantium, destroyed by the Turks, by earth tremors and by the weariness of centuries.

* Pillars which have the same angle of inclination as that of the angel of the pillar in the "Instruments of the Passion", a 16th century *mille fleurs* tapestry.

In the country we pass nothing but barracks and soldiers. In towns we only see uniforms similar to those of the inspectors of the Quai des Orfèvres. But they are just middle class Turkish men who look like that because from one day to the next they have been made to wear European soft hats.

What is really new is the written language. Istanbul in this language sounds like "Estatu". The new phonetic language is designed purely for the ear, and side-tracks sounds which are difficult to pronounce. The eyes feel surprised by it. No doubt this surprise will yield a rich harvest. It will give young writers the opportunity of doing fresh things with a language which had formerly to be treated with great respect, and which can now be used as disrespectfully as they like. Out of this they may forge a language which may be truly modern and capable of expressing rapidly anything at all. If they use it as they should, our beautiful old languages will become as stiff and staid by comparison as Mandarin is to modern Chinese. This new language, freed from etymology, grammar and syntax, a language which allows them to write: "Tabl-dot" and "Vagonli" demands a man of genius to take it firmly in hand, break it, whittle it down, bend it, remake it and give it shape. It hampers the University teachers who vacillate between the traditional language and the local esperanto. They had to move quickly. There was too little time to educate the people and bring them up to the level of the real Turkish language. So they started on the language and brought it down to the level of all. This has disturbed the élite and made it easy for pupils. It is up to some poet, I said before, to create and stabilise the oral language and give it a permanent form in writing.

A long task, as are all those which this nation is facing heroically, because it was time that they should cease to live their lives kneeling on tombs, and that they should live, just live, overcoming the necropolis of memories, and turning their backs on a crushing heritage. The Turkish people have heroic souls. They do not take the edicts of Kamal Pasha passively but, except for a few old families, who still shut themselves up in their homes wearing

the fez, they think over the orders they receive and put them into action only when they understand their meaning.

This is the opposite to our way of working. With us action precedes thought. With us revolutions kill off. In Turkey few were killed in their revolution. This comes from the fact that Turks proceed from the abstract to the concrete, whereas Western races take the opposite road from the concrete to the abstract, they allow things to evoke thought in them, they do not create things out of a long evocation of thought.

Having said this—look at the discomfort! How would it be possible to effect a complete reversal of the internal processes of one's being without producing discomfort, even anguish. This nation is suffering and it wills to suffer, it is sad and it re-enforces its sadness. It knows that to compromise like France results in nothing.

From the magnificent Turkish drama there emerges much that is astonishing on the roads and by the Bosphorus, and the traveller who passes by is amazed by what he sees. Everything looks as if someone had escaped from it, as if it had been emptied of something. It is full of the shadow of something no longer here, it has strayed into space between what was and what must one day be.

Once the void has been accepted and the sense of discomfort overcome by each and everyone, this uncomplaining pride will inspire respect.

Constantinople was a goldsmith's clasp between the East and the West. The goldsmiths have broken the clasp. Now Istanbul creates in her mind a new clasp. This is why I am glad I was not distracted by the "local colour" which made Théophile Gautier turn back at the gates. This is why the spirit of youth in Turkey rouses my heartfelt enthusiasm much more than her buildings. And that is why I went out to find on the Eyoub hillside, the shadow of the little painted and corsetted man, because he was not a dilettante. He loved this city with all his heart.

1st May, 1949.

I am writing on a trunk in the communal dressing-room, in which our artistes make up and dress as if they were in a school dormitory. Over there Yvonne is raging furiously. It is the Sunday matinée. An enormous hall, full in spite of the sun, is listening religiously to the play. They are laughing when they should, they are quiet when they should be, and they are clapping as I write these words.

I had to go down to acknowledge the applause, as the audience were calling for me and would not leave. Many extra calls. Tonight it's *Les Monstres*.

2nd May, 1949.

I did not stay on while they gave *Les Monstres*. I had been out to dinner a fairly long way from Istanbul, to a little fishermen's inn where men and women from the city go for peace and for fish caught the same day.

We were too busy drinking vodka and eating spring onions, caviar and fried mussels to get back in time for the end of the show. I was afraid that *Les Monstres* would seem too thin in a hall which swallows up both the voices and the facial expressions of the actors. I was wrong. The audience, it seems, underlined the slightest shades. You might say that they guessed them, and they called for me at the end. Yvonne de Bray had to go forward to the footlights and tell them that I was not in the theatre.

From 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. took a walk through the bazaar, a real rag-market held in cellars, where the rays of sunlight come in as unexpectedly as angels. Except for some brass with its golden gleams, everything goes on in the twilight amongst goods piled high, men sewing, percolators, samovars, leather which has kept the shape of the beasts who wore it, and stalls covered with a mixture

of hideous pictures and ravishing jewels. Even the men who sell tiny green plums the size of olives recognise us as we pass by. Kokto! Kokto! . . . It must be due to the Turkish papers which we can't read but which tell them about us.

I reached the Atlas Cinema at 5.30 p.m. in the car of Camille Bergeaud, the cultural relations official at the Embassy, who is piloting us around with untiring patience.

At this point I begin to feel the pangs of horror which I always feel before meeting a new audience. Behind the curtain I can hear the noise, as of the sea, of eighteen hundred people taking their seats and becoming the element which makes me feel sea-sick. As usual I have prepared nothing and have to take the plunge. The first moment is awful, but in a little while, the water gets less cold. Three knocks. Spotlights shine out. The curtain goes up and I go on. What can I possibly say? This time it all goes well. The audience is talented. Its waves carry me and I plunge headlong into my subject. I walk up and down between the microphones. The black hangings begin to billow out, as the red hangings did in Alexandria. I speak about it to the audience, and then ask the men in the wings to arrange the stuff so that this black Yseult veil should not disturb me any longer. The audience is amused and the ice is broken. After an hour and a quarter, I stop because they are making signs to me from the wings that the stage has to be free for them to arrange the lighting for the play. I could have gone on till 9 o'clock. I spoke at length about the Turkish language and about a good few other difficult questions. Amongst others of the awkward feeling and the lack of balance of a town which has decided to cut itself adrift from its habits.

Cocktail Party at the Swiss Consul's.

Dinner at the Bosphorus pleasure-gardens. Again I missed the end of *Les Monstres*. Same success.

3rd May, 1949

Lunch at the R's home. Then at full speed to the theatre where

Marais is arranging the décor and the lighting for *Britannicus*. There we learn that we have to go to Ankara, which will prevent me from staying in Greece for any time. All day at the theatre. I am writing these notes at the hotel before the performance.

One has to live in Istanbul to know what the "style heureux" is really like. By contrast with the rest, it sings. It's like a mixture of Englishmen in Nice and Russian princes. One can see Marie Baskirtcheff behind all the verandah windows which embellish the wooden houses of 1898, 1900 and 1912. A lady is always sitting there watching the road. An old harem habit. The "style heureux" is Mena House, in Egypt. Here, it is the Pera Palace where the hall, the staircase, the lifts, the corridors and the bedrooms recall past elegance like the ladies with sunshades who surround Pierre Loti on the fading, yellowed photograph which they bring you to look at while you take yagourt on the hillside at Eyoub.

Muhsin Ertugul, the great Turkish actor, is giving his jubilee performance. He is acting in an American play. I shall go to pay him my respects at the charming "drama theatre" which he directs. He was a pupil of Antoine, to whom the Turks owe much.

Muhsin Bey terrifies all those around him, in the style of Antoine. When I arrived at the theatre, I found an exquisite creature with white hair falling down on to his collar, a red face, and eyes sparkling with intelligence. He has given in Turkish three of our plays, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *Ruy Blas* and *The Eagle with Two Heads*. *Les Parents Terribles* has been forbidden after forty performances because Turkish families, so they say, do not behave like that.

I am writing in the common dressing room, in which the actors dress. Dorziat is on the stage with Balachova (first scene of *Britannicus*), Marais is being strapped into his armour. He is doing his hair with curling irons, and it reminds me of the days of my childhood when Mounet-Sully and later de Max astonished me by the Chinese ceremonial which preceded their make-up. Yvonne de Bray is coming into the dressing room. She has just come from the auditorium and she says that the audience is very good-tempered

in the way they accept seats from which they can see nothing but the actors' heads. People stand up to see and make it difficult for others to hear. And theatres are like this in the world's finest cities!

Marais is putting red powder on his hair. The dressers hold out towels to prevent the powder from falling on to his white armour. Our chief mechanic, Edouard, dressed as a guard, helps with the powdering. I am sitting on a trunk. It's like a circus caravan.

Gabrielle Dorziat is going back on to the stage while the audience is clapping and clapping. She will never recover from her débutante's stage fright, and I congratulate actresses who do not recover from it. Stage fright is beginning to come over Marais. "All the better," he says, "I should be afraid if I had none". This is the dreadful but delicious fluid in which actors bathe, and it is this that makes them able to begin everlastingly the same work over and over again.

The three knocks. The rumble of the curtains being drawn apart. Silence. Marais goes on. They clap him. In the dressing room Gabrielle calms herself by putting blue on her eye-lids and pinning her emeralds into her red wig. The guards come in and out. From a distance, I can hear Marais' voice with its strange crescendos. The wall takes away all shades of tone. The dressers whisper as if they could be heard out there. Nothing is more odd than the reverse side of tragedy. Balachova, catching up the grey and green folds of her dress, brings me a *gauloise*, the last one left. (She is trying to withdraw her attention). All this will seem childish to readers, unless they love the theatre and understand how beautiful it is to live in anguish for the sake of a play written long ago, in the time of Louis XIV.

I can hear the silence of the hall. It is compact. Although the numerous people whom I met at the Swiss Consul's complained of this horrible hall and said how they missed whole sentences, the audience strain to catch every inflection from the distant moonlike floor of the stage, and they make an effort equal to that of the

actors who force their voices and their gestures to the requirements of the hall.

This effort on both sides adds to the perfection of the performance, and perhaps this imperfection covered over by a warm interchange is better than cold perfection.

Nero comes out of his hiding place and Junie flees away. "My rival has her love" . . . The strength of a play lies in acting it as if for the first and last time. This is the price which must be paid for the fire of tragedy.

The curtain goes up immediately . . .

"How did my mother look,

When all her pride had sought, her luck now took".

Marais was hard, insolent, honeyed, sulky and superb.

"Farewell, too deep my pain, far from Junie".

Marais throws away what are usually glorious exits. He seems to say to the public, "don't clap". In spite of this, he is applauded at

"Know that I see thee now".

I am listening to Agrippine and Burrhus at a distance. I never cease to be astonished by this work, which is so well proportioned and which rises to its utmost heights like a pyramid, crammed with political secrets and secrets of love.

Now we are approaching the great and violent scene between Nero and Britannicus. From the dressing room I can see nothing, but the performance goes on within my eyes. I have seen it from the wings.

"I had to keep my peace and make you safe".

Debar said that really well. I can imagine Marais, on the practicable, at a fair distance from the curtain, ready to spring forward.

That's it; the voices are hurled at each other.

"At least she holds her peace".

Marais screams out the words as if he were beside himself. He takes a long time, walks across towards the footlights and only

speaks when he has overcome his rage—he then hisses between his teeth

“Be silent, as she is”.

After the actors finish, the audience seems as if it would never stop recalling them.

Balachova told me the following story. She was in town this morning with Inès. A lot of boys were playing with goats. Balachova and Inès wanted to stroke the goats which were with the boys, but they ran away. The two friends were going away, but one of the boys ran after them with a goat which he lent them to stroke. They did not dare to get out their purses and so they went on with their walk. When they returned, two boys ran forward, one with a goat and another with a bunch of irises. This time they took out their purses, but the urchins refused to take any money. Balachova said to Inès, “Let some money fall on the ground, they’ll pick it up when we have gone”. As they were going along the road the boys ran after them and gave them back their money. That’s what Turkish boys are really like. If there are some who beg, it’s because that is their trade.

Dorziat and Marais have now finished their great scene in the fourth act. The audience is applauding them.

Marais is displeased. He says that he was forcing himself. I drew his attention to the fact that his system, which is based on absolute sincerity, is anti-theatrical, and that to-night the effects came off much better than usual. What the actor thinks has nothing to do with the effect he produces.

Now he is in the middle of his scene with Burrhus and about to begin the scene with Narcisse, which is one of his best scenes. He ends it looking intently at the lines of his right hand, and this adds an unusual sense to his words:—“Let us see what we must do”, which sounds rather a flat exit otherwise when it is not accompanied by the usual tricks used by official tragedians. He goes through the whole act clad in his red cloak. He goes on again covered in it from head to foot. He wonders why he is so hot. It’s natural. He is burning, shut up in an oven.

I never get tired of seeing an actor, deep in his thoughts, arranging his costume. I noticed Marais, going back to the communal dressing room before the last act when he does nothing but cross the stage. One would think that he was getting ready for a long trying experience. He neither sees us nor himself. His hands alone work, seem to look for something, they knot, adjust, roll up or unroll and arrange the least folds with the skill and patience of an Arab winding his turban as if he were alone while the motor cars of Cairo rush past him.

It is nearly at an end. "And who, Madame? . . ." "You". Dorziat says, "Farewell, you may depart", with great nobility and *hauteur*.

Silence. This is when Marais comes towards Agrippine as if to answer her, then changes his mind and goes out quickly at the back of the stage with Marcel André. I can hear their steps resounding as they go. Balachova must be half dead with fright. It's her turn. She now has a long uninteresting tirade to say, but she makes it very moving and at this point she carries the whole weight of the work on her shoulders.

The curtain comes down and goes up again to a hail-storm of clapping. It's the sixth recall. Now another. They are calling out. Still another recall. And another. Then the actors come back to the common dressing-room.

I have amused myself writing these reporter-like notes of the performance—may I be forgiven—but this whole book is written for the few madmen who are still passionately in love with theatrical work.

4th May, 1949.

A revolution never comes to an end. That is what I am trying to explain to youth. It is for them to go on to further revolutions.

Following political revolutions the deeper revolutions begin—those which no one takes seriously, the only ones which matter. Revolutions of the word and of thought. In Turkey as in Egypt the Society of Authors cannot yet function. Authors are not protected. They cannot live. If they wish to live they must throw everything over and make their own revolution.

Matinée. The public comes into the hall by no perceptible channels, just as the water did into the New Circus in my childhood. No one seems to be coming in, but not a single chair remains empty. More chairs are brought in. The great rumbling noise of everyone moving and talking at once has begun. I notice this looking through a chink in the curtain which opens electrically—which means to say that, once out of every ten times, it remains half open instead of completely open.

Very fine article in the “Istambul”. I wish that our journalists in France would study the acting of the players as thoroughly as they do here.

Here is an extract from an article by Madame Sabatier:—

“Moved by intuition alone and absorbed by the human feeling of his part, it would have been impossible for Jean Marais to do other than destroy the most hard and fast of all conventions—that of speech itself. In this lies the marvellous work of this actor. He kneads and pounds the material of verse, and makes it more subtle to the rhythm of dramatic acting, without losing one iota of the music and nobility of the lines. The strength of this work is underlined by his silences . . . for Racine was a revolutionary working with fire and blood.

This is why M. Jean Marais seems to us to have renewed the genius of classic tragedy. His name will go down in the history of the theatre beside that of the greatest”.

The reception of the journalists at the Club was very moving. It was no longer a question of duties politely discharged between hosts and guests, but of people meeting in newly formed friendship.

which had nothing to do with the stage performances. I scarcely knew how to reply to so much warmth and kindness. I said that I had left my mind in the theatre, where it observed and helped the actors, so that I only had my heart at their disposal—this was no doubt all to the good, as hearts speak all languages.

5th May, 1949.

This morning at 11 a.m., the students' centre. Eight hundred young men and women between nineteen and twenty-four years of age. Many of them either do not understand French at all or understand it only enough to misunderstand the real meaning. Their President will come on to the platform with me, translating what I say sentence by sentence, and in order to help him with his task I shall hold his shoulder, facing the microphone. This is an audience which has to be freed of its tensions. After ten minutes, I feel the knots slackening. They laugh and open up their hearts and minds into which I walk and do not quit until the end. I was to have spoken about the French theatre and cinema. As usual, I spoke of nothing of the kind. I spoke to them of individualism and of the extraordinary unity which can be reached by a band of individualists who rise to the full height of themselves each along his or her own line. From such unified groups a nation can emerge, instead of falling flat.

Bergeaud, who was sitting in the front row made signs to me. Le Vali (the Mayor of the City) was waiting for us. Those in power have the greatest confidence in him. I brought my talk to a close and asked the audience to forgive me for going, but they took the platform by storm. In spite of entreaties and the orders of Perrin, note-books and school-books were flapping round my ears. I was surrounded and made to sign and sign. They presented me with a sheaf of tulips. Cameras got to work. The students went with us



Drawing of the Sphinx by Jean Cocteau.

to the car to which the Consul and Vice-Consul took me off by force.

Le Valli received us at the "Sublime Port". He is a medical man who took his doctorate in Germany. He is tall and has a pleasant face which is both alive and human.

I put before him the problem of theatrical performances which are too expensive for young people. In the new theatre, of which there is as yet nothing to be seen but the scaffolding, this vice must be overcome and a system found of making rich people pay double in order to give free performances for students.

I arrived too late at the theatre where Edouard was arranging the décor and lighting for *La Machine*. I returned to Bergeaud the sports guns which he had lent us for *Léocadia*, and I invited him to have lunch with me in town. We returned to his home to let his wife know what we were doing, and she asked me to stay and join them in their family lunch. I accepted with all the more pleasure because I noticed the house was in the old *style heureux* of Istanbul.

The little wooden-fronted house is built on a platform overlooking the Bosphorus. Before the erection of new buildings, in the sanatorium-style, the Eyoub hill could be seen from the windows. In order to reach this flying hut, we had to go through a narrow passage way, down some steps, turn sharp round the corner, go up other steps and then we found we had reached a caravanserai which is Greek, French and Turkish (Madame Bergeaud is Greek) and where the children, who speak all three languages, were chasing each other from room to room, armed with riding whips. In Bergeaud's study, which has a sun as centre piece—a shining copper dish—I discovered one of the loveliest things imaginable:—a Greek ram in stone with a sea-horse's neck, emerging from acanthus leaves. Its mouth and eyes come straight from the devil.

I had never seen anything like this animal, whose smile is even more intriguing than a Hindu god's. No doubt this is the most curious thing in Istanbul together with the serpentine of green bronze Delphi between the pyramids.

I find Bergeaud's kindness and his confidence all the more

touching because the diplomats of Ankara accused him of having advised us to burn the capital. (He tells me I am the only Frenchman to whom he has not once said what should be or should not be repeated). The accusation is quite untrue. We only discussed transport problems with theatre managers. Our company had always agreed to lose quite a large sum of money going to Ankara.

So Madame Bergeaud is Greek. In the eighteen years of their married life the Bergeauds have seen modern buildings spring up and interrupt their view more and more to the right and left of their yellow perch. But, outside, the view includes the sea, cupolas and islands, and inside there is the good table for which they asked to be forgiven. For years Madame Bergeaud has spoken her own language; she calls a young stag (*jeune cerf*) a *chevril* (*cerfeuil*), and so in this Istanbul caravanserai she embodies the fancies of Euripides.

Nothing gives me more lively pleasure than to hear the stories of these French people who have been present at the birth-pangs of a nation which seemed to be dying but returned to life under the fist of a great leader. Ata-Turk acted quickly. With us the revolution donned a red cap. In Istanbul it took off the red cap, the phrygian cap of liberty. One day Ata-Turk appeared before the people in a European jacket and a bowler hat. He spoke to them dressed like that and told them that these were the clothes they would have to wear in future. Then he gave balls, and made all the Turks, with their heads newly free from the fez, bring their wives with them; the wives, painted as they had been in the seraglio, but with their faces uncovered, crowded together in corners. Ata-Turk himself led the dance, and the amazed husbands saw their wives whirling round in the arms of other men. And so Ata-Turk identified himself with the people, and they saw themselves in him, and without even realising where they were going, the now freed people flung themselves into the new order of things, like luggage into a railway van. One night Ata-Turk gave a banquet. The Egyptian ambassador came wearing his tarboosh. Ata-Turk came solemnly forward, removed the Ambassador's tarboosh, placed it

on a silver salver, and commanded that it should be taken out into the hall. The Ambassador never returned to Istanbul.

And all this, all this immense Mediterranean undertaking was conducted by Ata-Turk with his back to the Eastern wall, his eyes turned to Europe.

Raki killed him. For the sake of his place in history, it was a magnificent moment for him to die, but for his people it was ten years too soon.

May youth understand him and may the revolutionary movement which he started continue. I said so to the students, this morning, in these words:—"It is for you to continue this reformation into the realm of the invisible".

7th May, 1949.

Yesterday we all went together to the islands, in a crowded boat. Glorious weather. Not a breath of wind, and the sunshine is still bearable. Lunch outside and excursions in open carriages like those in Palma in Majorca. They have charming straw bodies with scarlet leather seats. Agile little horses with human eyes.

I returned by the 3 o'clock boat in order to be back in Istanbul at 5 o'clock, as I was giving a talk under the auspices of the Philharmonic Society. The large island is rather like Porquerolles or Port Cros, and, looking at it, you think it must be one of those other islands which memory has enlarged and deformed. On the shore road and all over the island, there are *style heureux* houses. I imagine that people who live under the present régime and are afraid of it, even regretting old times, come back here to dream of the past. Motor cars are forbidden.

I spoke from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. to the members of the Philharmonic Society. I let myself go, carried away by memories of my childhood and youth. Debussy, Satie, Stravinsky, Auric, Poulenc,

Honneger, Darius Milhaud, and the poets Apollinaire, Max Jacob, Reverdy and Cendrars. I no longer saw the audience. It seemed to me that I was talking to myself about this marvellous generation of musicians and writers of which they have not the faintest idea in Istanbul. Anecdotes followed each other, whole scenes between Satie and Debussy came to life as I spoke of them and I *was* these two men who lent me their ways and gestures as I spoke. I was standing in the middle of the room with the audience around me, instead of facing me as an audience usually does, and I turned this way and that, in an almost hypnotic condition as I tried—like a medium at a Spiritualist séance—to make the dead live again.

This morning I spoke at the University. Eight hundred students in an atmosphere similar to that in which I formerly spoke to the 'Collège de France'. I make every effort not to be a talking machine. Each time I endeavour to speak of something fresh, and not to start off in the same way, as with me the point of departure sets the pace, and vision comes out of it.

I spoke of *La Machine Infernale*, and of the myth of Oedipus. Oedipus only saw clearly when his eyes were gone. From this I warned the youth of Turkey to be on guard against the findings of nations who see too clearly and who for lack of shadow and depth, cease to be truly human.

The students rushed the platform and demanded signatures. Visit to the Principal. We spoke German. He was brought up in Germany and although he understands and can speak French, it frightens him.

The University stands straight above the Bosphorus, like a ship in dry dock.

The Principal asked me whether I would be willing to speak to the staff now that I had already spoken to the students. I only have three days left and work enough for eight. We arranged that the University staff should come to the "Beaux-Arts" where I was going to give a talk on the Monday morning.

More and more it is spirit rather than things that arouses my enthusiasm, except when a thing conjures up the human spirit and

serves as a magic wand to make it live more fully. These contacts with students are infinitely more interesting than visits to mosques, to which all mere visits are an indecency, as they interfere with worship.

The Principal thanked me for having said to the students that good and bad students should learn from each other and that without the freedom of spirit of certain bad students, the discipline of the good students would have no value. I had given as examples the cases of Valéry and Giraudoux, who illustrated this point extremely well as they understood how to use the privilege of appearing to be lazy. Their good and bad work made an exciting mixture.

I was very touched by the fact that the Principal took this well and did not read into it any encouragement for laziness. He admitted to me that he was often more interested in scholastically poor students than in those who appeared to be sure of themselves, and that he asked the professors and lecturers to keep an eye on them and not to reprimand them.

No one could have been more sympathetic to these ideas than Michaud and his wife, who both teach French and with whom I was lunching after leaving the University—there is nothing pedantic about them. We deplored together that France seemed quite unable to understand that, in order to counter a propaganda of the majority, a minority propaganda must be launched.

What an incredible conglomeration of races there are in the city of Istanbul, in this planless amphitheatre with tier upon tier of dwellings, which have been burnt and rebuilt hundreds of times. Take a walk amongst this strange complexity of dwellings and types of thought and find if you can the basis for a line of propaganda. I think that perhaps the only nation which could tackle such propaganda would be Germany.

France only knows how to set in motion rather mad types of propaganda. The way in which the fame of Joan of Arc developed is very revealing. Who was this Joan? A peasant who was not of peasant stock. A military chief who knew nothing about strategy.

An illiterate woman who spoke more beautifully than anyone else. A great writer who did not know how to write. A dead person who did not die. A sky-blue phoenix who came to life out of ashes. A failure who was the height of success. A political leader set up by three factions. In fact an enigma, a symbol of our national spirit.

This is the spirit which should be encouraged, even or especially if it distracts people and seems preposterous. Here is the only chance we have of playing a role in the great machine, built on the basis of industrialism. Probably one of the charms of France to those of other nationalities, a charm whose power is verified everywhere, lies in the fact that we Frenchmen come with empty hands and without imperialistic designs.

Sunday, the 8th.

Sartre's play went very well. Feydeau's play did so less the first than the second day. It is true that his clock-like precision demands perfect precision in the actors and that effects don't come off if precision is lacking, and our company (who are not very fond of his play, to tell the truth) are far from perfect in this direction.

La Machine, in spite of its ill-set décor, has been one of our great successes. I had to come back to acknowledge the applause of the audience who refused to leave.

This country interests me more and more every day and I am leaving behind me purposely the story of mistakes I have made through lack of understanding. These mistakes show how an observant man, without sufficient knowledge of all that concerns a town, finds it difficult to penetrate its spirit.

France, which is seen from the outside as a mass of individualists, and who never hesitates to tell an unfavourable anecdote about herself, remains indecipherable beyond her borders. For the

same reason her policy is incomprehensible, as policy can be seen only in long sweeps.

The Turks are nomads. In the confines of Istanbul, what should flow stagnates, deprived of movement. No doubt Turkey has to be looked for elsewhere, in the country districts of Anatolia or in Ankara, towards whose Universities the peasants direct their foot-steps, as the peasants of the Alpes Maritimes direct theirs to the city factories.

The question of religion has not been settled. The spiritual exercises of the Mohammedan religion are too simple to be separated from a simple people. It would have been very easy to do away with an esoteric or philosophical religion. Here, a religion which was looked up to has come to be beneath the level of the present stage of development. The priest has become a civil servant. His position is the more assured because of the fact that this country, in which the army and the government predominate, lacks administrators. He is the only man who can do administrative work *sub-rosa*. No doubt religious forces secretly resist the separation of Church and State. Last week members of the Government offered up prayers in the House. They were jailed. In future they will be able to pray in their cells.

The Istanbul amphitheatre rises up to face the stage of Europe. Kemal Pasha was a Mediterranean. He often spoke of the Europe towards which he gazed, with his back to the Eastern wall.

Went to see the open air theatre of Istanbul. It has newly been built in a bowl set in the hills and facing the Bosphorus, not far from the old yellow palace of Abd-ul-Hamid's sister.

The theatre has two thousand seats. The walls round the stage seem to me too low to give good acoustics where there is so much wind.

Lunch at the Perrins'. Theatre. Giving *La Machine* again at the matinée. I am writing between the Acts while the temporary stage hands are nailing down the sloping practicables on which the stage will be arranged. The Act in which the Sphinx appears always produces the same effect. The Third Act, which is more intimate,

must be difficult to follow in this accursed hall. We shall see what the Fourth produces (Oedipus the King). It had a great success yesterday. Marais, who is now blind, fell from the practicable. He managed so well to make what was an accident look intentional, that the spectators thought it was.

May, 1949.

We are leaving Istanbul. I feel as if I had spent months there. Not because my visit seemed long to me. But because I have lived through and known so many experiences that time has lost all meaning to me and the dates of our tour have no relationship with the uncharted kingdom of the spirit.

Each visit, each contact with others, is enclosed in space, and I can hardly believe that these separate experiences took place in a twenty-four hour day.

Here is yesterday's programme. Eleven a.m. School of Art (what is left of it after a fire). Studios. Nudes. Short fat women, pink and fawn coloured, similar to those in the "Turkish Bath" by Ingres. Rather timid cubist work. Sensitive hands and souls, following our tradition. Schooled in the intricacies of oriental writing. Léopold Lévy conducts the classes and gives them the stamp of the graceful anarchy of France.

Lunch in the School of Art dining-room with the masters. Speak to the pupils. I tell them that I prefer to hear of the training of the soul to the training of the mind, and that they must not confuse what is the portrait of the model with what is the stamp of the painter; in other words, a painter always does a portrait of himself and it is through this inner portrait that he enchants us.

Bergeaud took me to the Atlas. Meeting of the whole company. Family 'buses. Boring visit to the seraglio. I can't bear guides and so made my escape. Alone, I can find the meaning of many strangely ugly things. The Turks are nomads. They are taciturn.

as soon as they cease to be on the move. The seraglio is a nomad's camp. The kitchens, kitchens on wheels, cater for a thousand to two thousand persons. Between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, Sultans added stone tents to stone tents, and then added more and constructed kiosks. One would like to play *Bajazet* in this setting. Heads were cut off here. Here they piled up villainous Sèvres vases, presents from France. They went out in carriages made of mother of pearl, mica and velvet, and Abd-ul-Hamid, who was afraid of his own shadow, had a carriage which he drove himself and which had been constructed so that the horses could be freed at a touch. He sent the horses off at full gallop towards any bombs which might have been set for him.

Exhausted, I leave this old curiosity shop of weapons and Chinese pottery. The sarcophagus, said to be Alexander's, and the adolescent boy draped in a hooded cloak refresh me. The one is full of colour, elaborate, legendary. The other is pale, similar to the rays of sunlight which shine through the bazaar.

5 o'clock, Hachette's book-shop. I sign five hundred books.

6.30 p.m. At the Consul's. He shows me his Turkish library in which he sleeps. On his desk, a picture of his dead dog. A reassuring sign. He points out to me how the Turkish phrases in Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* were the most frightful obscenities. Did Molière suspect this? But the Court understood them.

9 p.m. I had to say good-bye in public. We were expected to await the arrival of Dr. Lufti-Kindar (le Vali). As I was afraid that the audience might get restless and not understand the delay, I started. The hall was full. Chairs had been brought in and placed wherever possible. During *Les Parents Terribles* I dined with Abdullah. Went back to the theatre. At the end the actors were applauded vigorously. They called for me. I went up, bowed my acknowledgments and said a last few words to the Turkish people.

After the performance, we went back to the Bergeauds', to the exquisite house overlooking the Bosphorus.

To bed at 4 a.m.

10th May, 1949.

This morning, at 11 o'clock, I went with Bergeaud to the Lazarist College of Saint Benoît (Lulecihendek-Galata). It is in the prostitutes' quarter. Steep roads crumbling to pieces. The ancient Lazarist House is the oldest school in Istanbul. The Fathers—now called the Gentlemen—do not wear cassocks, but they still wear beards. Father Bertrand leads us. This is the first visit they have had from a French writer since Barrès visited them at the time he was writing *A Garden on the Orontes*. The teachers surround me and tell me that they have given their pupils an essay to write:—"Give a description of the extempore talk of Jean Cocteau at the University". They have left the essays for me to collect. They take me in to the class room. I collect the essays. I speak to the pupils. Father Siffred will not let me go without seeing the school theatre of which he is the producer. The pupils have given *Athalie*, and the *Persians* there. Stairs going down. The theatre is adorable, similar to those of some French provincial "café concert". A graceful white-wood balcony round the hall like the one they must have had in the Hotel de Bourgogne. I can hardly bear to leave this place with its gallant atmosphere, so ready to attempt things. But Dr. Gascin is waiting for me at the French Hospital.

The hospital which Dr. Gascin takes me round in his white suit is really a nursing home, clean, full of flowers and sunlight and without the nauseating smell of antiseptics.

One feels very near to France in Istanbul.

Back to the Park Hotel for lunch at 2 p.m. Had to eat quickly and close my suit-cases. Madame G. was waiting for me in the dining room with a bag full of albums from the pupils of the English School where she teaches French. I signed.

And I am writing these notes with my cases all ready. We are off to Ankara to-night.

Ram Gopal is giving his programme of dances in Ankara after we leave. The Indian Ambassador invited me to dinner with Ram the day before he opened his season. I am afraid that we may not

be ready to leave on the 14th. Shall I be able to go to Greece? The Greek Consul has signed our visas in any case, and has written to the Embassy at Athens, saying that I should like a rest and that I do not wish to speak in public.

Good-bye Stambul. Good-bye Istanbul. Good-bye Constantinople. Good-bye City born to the Purple. City of blood, of sunsets, of fires. Good-bye city of royal lineage.

12th May, 1949.

My exhaustion is too deep and makes me too confused to describe the details of our work in Ankara.

To tell of the success of the company is impossible. It would look vain-glorious, which is not at all in the style of this troupe of "good companions". Besides, the success goes beyond our work; it is addressed to France.

France should really know what she means to others, and what is expected of her. But she does not know how heroically a man like Bonneau teaches our language to Anatolian peasants who come down from their arid mountains. She does not know that the Turks who speak French speak better than we do. She does not know that if our films were sent here in the diplomatic bags, our prestige would be saved, they would be shown on the screens of all the live centres of Ankara and Istanbul and so our dead markets would come alive again.

15th May, 1949.

There is a certain priggishness about Ankara. Istanbul considers

that the city of Ankara is artificial. Ankara declares that Istanbul is nothing but a cosmopolitan bog. In reality Istanbul is prolonging her life. The celebrated old prima-donna has had her skin 'stretched' in America. But she keeps the old look in her beautiful eye, some jewels and the fame of her triumphs. Ankara's career is beginning. Her renown is to come. Towards the end of his life, Ata-Turk began to wonder about her. An astonishing city. A bivouac in the mountains. Full of marble tents. The diplomats' seraglio. Political Hollywood. It must not be forgotten that Constantine built Constantinople in great haste. It was so badly built that Constantine had to re-build it. It was not constructed for a longer life than an International Exhibition.

The Embassies all have villas for their stars. At this rate France must be the star of stars. Gaston Bergery, whom everyone loves, has made the French Embassy into a thing of great beauty. Its tall white columns stand out on the hillside, below a circle of mountains full of deep shadows. The sparkling air comes into the public rooms and bedrooms. As gay and open as the face of Jean Lescuyer, the Ambassador. The theatre is a lace-work of bronze, marble, coral and crystal.

Muhsin-Ertugul, when he is here, lays down barrack laws, as unsuitable as could be in this elegant setting.

Ankara is more German than American. The Faculty of French reminds me of a hospital. M. Bonneau has seven hundred students of whom a number come from the plains of Anatolia, and so they pass from the silence of the wilderness to the study of European languages, and they do so with amazing ease and intelligence. I spoke on Thursday the 12th in the great lecture-hall, in front of the Principal, the Ambassador, the lecturing staff and the students.

That evening *Les Parents Terribles* had the greatest luck. Everything helped it. The auras of the public and the actors met and interlocked in the no man's land of the orchestra, which is covered in. The actors surpassed themselves. The audience had genius. The President himself, who is partially deaf, was delighted at our

reception and asked us to see him in his box, to which the company came straight from the wings.

Jean Marais considers that he is too old for the part and he said to me, "It's the last time I shall play it". I imagine that during this performance he burnt himself nearly out and his fellow actors took fire from him. So did the public.

I pass over the official luncheons and dinners. Nothing dragged or seemed heavy.

Friday the 13th.

Homely lunch at the Embassy. At 2 p.m. I took a spray of flowers to the white tomb of Ata-Turk at the Ethnographic Museum. At 3 p.m. arranged lighting of *La Machine Infernale*. The electricians had been on strike. They have come back and are working carelessly. Sound systems which are too new (and which can therefore be old fashioned at any moment) always distract me. No human contact. This enchanting theatre is playing at being a factory. As a result of all this marvellous mechanism, at night the microphones, which were removed between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m., are out of order and the play is acted in an arid void without my spoken commentary and without the trumpets. These gaps make the actors uncomfortable. The public feels that something is wrong without knowing what makes the play seem badly balanced. In fact, in spite of the success, the evening makes me sad. I should have liked to have finished our peregrinations on a happy note.

Between the work with the lights and the performance, I had a cocktail party of the Arts Faculty, the Presidency of the Centre of Translation and the Radio Station, where I spoke at 8 p.m.

I am writing in the coach which brings us back to Istanbul. Eight hours of jolting about in a hot atmosphere instead of one hour in a plane. These are the little economies one goes in for at

the end of a tour. Perrin, who spoilt us when we were with him, is giving us a send-off.

The Ambassador, who came to see us off in the coach, does not seem to like this way of doing things.

So here is one of the last of the gypsy caravans. An uncomfortable wagon. Some are sleeping as pupils in a class with their heads and arms spread out on the lino of the little tables, others play cards, while still others drink beer. Out of the window, a succession of green plains go past, followed by an occasional man, a fair number of asses and of the astrakhan sheep similar to the one which used to eat my rose-bushes, and of storks which float to earth like gliders. Dirty water meandering slowly along, willows, bearded oxen, and in the distance, long sweeps of mountains with vivid colours which melt deliciously into each other. They remind me, but in more tender shades, of the astonishing mountains round San Francisco which made me think, when I saw them, of Ambroise Vollard's shirt in Cézanne's portrait of him.

For two months and ten days, I have been:—"Master, My Master, My dear Master, Excellency, Ambassador, Doctor, Professor, *Mudur*" and anything else which can resemble a title in countries which cannot understand that a man may have no title. I have been treated according to all these honorifics.

Man I left and man I return. And not man of letters. Just a man. This lets me say what I think, not spare anyone and praise only those whose contact pleases me as human beings.

It does not matter whether countries are harassed from within or without. The beings of whom I speak and who lead their own lives, think of themselves with the same freedom as I do. If I am refused a passport, there are still more than enough countries for the time that is left for me to visit them.

1 o'clock. Still four hours journey to go. The view is more shut in. It is like Rodez (Cahors). Tunnels. All this countryside has no men in it. In the plains, the women wear striped cottons from the Istanbul bazaar. Trousers, and shawls over their heads.

They work in the fields and look like Vs or Ws—like scouts or athletes in a stadium.

We pass by mountains the colour of pigeons' breasts, streaked with pink and pale green, and always the great dark masses of cloud shadows. The members of the company are sleeping, broken, bent in two, thrown about in dramatic poses. The coach is becoming hotter.

In this deserted countryside, I think of the Turkish people which has emigrated everywhere and given its style to people who resemble it little if at all. Probably it was the ancestors of the present day Turks who instituted the Chinese theatre. That is at any rate the learned opinion of Dr. Wolfram Eberhard. That is why it would be too easy to find indications of the Turkish spirit in Turkey alone.

Turks are nomads and their influence has been far flung. One thing I noticed particularly about them. They are a Mediterranean race which does not gesticulate. The rest of us, who make gestures with our hands, are astonished that theirs are still. If you see a Turkish crowd waving their hands about, you find on going closer, that it includes Greeks, Armenians and Jews. We should examine this stillness and not think of it as cold. It is a stillness of the soul and it burns; if no signs of appreciation of a performance are shown by clapping or shouting it is because the impression received is sinking quietly and gravely, deep into the soul.

I must ask forgiveness for these disorderly notes. They move around a theatrical tour which leaves us little free time for observation. Dates, officials' visits, lorries, and other forms of transport, and sordid accounts continually arise as obstacles between us and our impatient desire to see clearly the meaning of all around us. Besides, except for Nerval, which of our writers has tried to find out about these things? They get lost in the bazaar.

The Turks have always attached a great deal of importance to clothing reforms and that of Kemel has its roots in history. Abdul-Hamid, the first Sultan from 1744 to 1789, took his walks abroad in disguise. If he met a woman whose dress was not strictly in accordance with the law, he would seize the delinquent and strip

her of whatever forbidden accessory she might be wearing. This story lays the foundation for Ata-Turk's gesture when he snatched the fez from the head of the Egyptian Ambassador.

We are nearing Istanbul. I shall return to see the column of Delphi, the green twisted cord round which three serpents twine, I shall go back to see it before flying away to Athens, to the city beaten by light wings and from which I shall perhaps contemplate the better this Istanbul ravaged by the red wings of flame.

Fire from the sky and from under the ground vie with each other in the destruction of this magnificent cemetery of a city. With her minarets pointing their beringed and thoughtful fingers, her dead, whose stelae lean over drunkenly, her halcyon skies and her waters where the dolphins roll. Istanbul seems to be under the influence of occult forces which detest her and human forces which ravage her. Between them she is never at peace. She seems to have been left derelict, given over to confusion.

15th May, 1949.

Istanbul. Karieh Djemi the perfect. What a great little marvel it is! Are we going under great arches or have we become giants? Everything seems vast and yet comes welcoming forward to the sight which caresses it. Hives of golden bees, honey-cake, flower-honey, veined walls covered with escutcheons of living shade, marble tigers, like ghost signatures in folded paper, like moths which fly by night.

With what grace your beauty crumbles. The leprosy which eats away your mosaics, copies the marble, surrounding it. Something as delicate as a breath of air can be seen appearing, fragments of faces, of hands, of the flying robes and the divine contortions of bodies painted by Giotto. And that Virgin, draped in coal dust . . . and the gold dust of domes, and the golden glue in which your

angels' wings are caught. Peacocks powdered in emerald dust and verdegri guard them. The guides tell you their history. Let me go far away and fill my memory full of them.

The courtyard of the Mosque of Selim, built by Sinan in the 16th century, is perfect. From the terrace, still another Istanbul can be seen. I never know on which side Istanbul will appear and it always looks different because of twists and turns of the water. On the left of the terrace, in the garden of the girls' school there is a cypress looped in wistaria full of mauve coloured snow.

The Mosque of Selim is built at the edge of one of the open tanks which is now used as a kitchen garden, beside which there is an orchard with fruit trees in flower.

A little further along we come through a sort of sap, straight on to the top of the openings of one of the covered-in cisterns. The water, which has disappeared, seems to have changed into a sea-green column. There is an under-water glimmering. A jungle. A forest of greenish marble with corinthian leafage. Formerly it was possible to go under here in boats as one can in the swamps of South America. This is the nearest idea one can get of what Byzantium was like.

The men have taken off the red fez, but the animals have kept their collars studded with blue stones. On a large pleasure pontoon we drink tea in glasses with spouts, by the Sea of Marmora. It is Sunday. The dolphins are enjoying themselves and the excursionists are rowing their boats about. To the left, Istanbul shows still another side to us.

Loud speakers of gramophones, an orchestra with nasal synco-pation and singers lamenting their lovers gone to the wars, resemble the sobbing plaints of Islam.

This whole town, in which one is deliciously lost, prevents writing, and I wish I could find time to tell about our last Sunday excursion. To-morrow we go to Athens, the city where the gods stroll along the streets like pigeons. As for the company, it is going to Paris.

The fact that Stamboul forgives us the scandalous adventure of the Crusades, really warms my heart.

16th May, 1949.

I am writing from the magic carpet of Air France. It shows us cities as they were imagined by the Turkish story-tellers. Other carpets, violet and green, cover the ground. The clouds are a soft alabaster. The Sea of Marmora is in hard stone. It looks frozen, made solid by ice which has imprisoned blue lights. We took off in Autumn cold and fog. The magic carpet shudders and floats in the sun.

Now we are taking the way of the gods. Under our vibrating lie of immobility, the world unrolls her true maps. The Aegean comes nearer. The magic carpet is changing.

Wings are growing on our carpet. The wings which were severed from Victories lest they should leave Greek soil.

Poseidon. A jade god.

We are flying over Lesbos; great shining bodies fly past us in the opposite direction. They are going to Troy.

The island is made of women, pale pink, entwined in sleep. How well the Greeks imagined and peopled this no-man's land which was neither heaven nor earth, this region which is still ours and has nothing to do with the infinite. The gods inhabited the top storey of the building. You could meet them on the stairs.

In Venice, I knew a gondolier who had never seen horses except on columns and cornices.

On the Acropolis, there are horses living with the swallows, there are temples which graze, columns which sleep, some lying down and others standing.

As I loved to look through the wings at our performances going on, so now, through the arches of the windows, I can see the con-

trivances of the theatre which is Greece. We begin to descend into the décor and from pink island to pink island, standing out deliciously in the shape of athletes, runners and birds.

Acropolis. The same emotion as in 1936... that of facing the irreparable. Chaos, pumice-stone coloured, masses of petrified heliotropes, limbs of a great quartered body thrown about in all directions, a body which stands upright amongst the patches of blood of the poppies; cages for big and little gods, open, hang in the air everywhere. The goddesses, now free, have flown away, and even the wingless Victory has been captured by her colleagues and taken by air to Olympus.

Then, low down and far away, a milky pool:—the theatre of Dionysos.

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Athens. What can have happened? A war is on, but everyone is smiling. Legs and arms are free. At the hotel there is singing in the corridors. When you ask advice, you receive it. The squares, which are scent-laden, are full of little red chairs. Pepper trees throw feathery shadows on the clean pavement. There is nothing taciturn in this dry air and all the lightness of this city unrolls itself round the base, which makes her into sculpture, which raises her to a symbol, lifts her into the sublime, to the smile of all smiles, up to the blonde cage of the gods, to the nesting place of the horses, and of the horseman whose leg shows round the corner of the eaves.

During one hundred years, a little city of twenty thousand souls showed the world what intelligence, style, poise, humanity and genius could be.

All this she summarises on a plateau, with her arms uplifted skywards. And this plateau now speaks. It says, "Never more".

The sky was cloudy. We had scarcely arrived at the hotel before we set off for the Acropolis. The ruins gave off their own gentle sunshine, an unwonted honey colour, through the greyness. When we left the Acropolis, we entered the Herod-Atticus theatre, and

we sat on the steps. A company of Greek players were arranging the décor for *Prometheus*. After we left the theatre, we sat down in an inn opposite and drank ouso. I could not make up my mind to go. The sky was changing all the time, gathering itself together, floating into streamers, becoming covered, then uncovered again. The sun continually changed the lighting of the young ruins. The previous day I had been crushed under pillars and domes. And now, this evening, sunlight and the Acropolis and the ruins drew me upwards, made me feel light and winged. I was no longer in the least tired.

And I asked myself:—why has the world lost grace? Why have those secrets which give light to our hearts been lost altogether? Why have we lost the secret of winging marble? Why are we, who perpetuate secrets, invisible? Why must our signs be hidden?

Five minutes after we left the Acropolis, a Greek threw himself down from it because the Greek football team had been beaten.

This little city! Only large enough to sit on Athena's open palm! Its roads are the lines of her hands.

Met Maria Kotopouli. She sprang out of her car in front of the hotel. A wild and touching meeting. Worthy of Athens where everything springs forward.

Let us go together on the Eleusian road to see Plato's olive tree, and the votive rock of Aphrodite.

Afternoon, Eleusis. The Eleusian mysteries, but nothing at all left of them here except huge crumbs. The temple blew out its brains in order not to give up its secrets. I can only see the grooves along which the doors slid-to, the steps, the hole through which Persephone went down into Hades. The sacrificial vat and channel and the inscription in Greek "Good luck", on the marble blocks. All round—the sea.

18th May, 1949.

I think of Greece as of a person, a living person. Athens is

someone. The Agora and the Tower of the Winds are organisms which live.

To-night we intended to go to the Herod-Atticus theatre. We dined facing it, at the little inn of the Acropolis. The King and Queen arrived. No one else was allowed in. We sat on at our tables and saw the projectors gleam one by one and pick out from the darkness the little white cage of the statue of Nike Apteris which seems suspended in space. The fire which burns behind the arches gives light and shadow to the Acropolis. Police and chauffeurs occupy the adjoining tables.

The Inn of Pyraeus. Dance music, noble, heroic, which springs to flowing life after some dull bars.

Dancing is forbidden. Everything which is human is little by little forbidden, in a world which hates what is human in any shape or form. The disorder of an unusual face, or the disorder of the Acropolis. Nothing but the order of architects who imitate. The dead order of the type of order which they try to impose everywhere.

19th May, 1949.

Sunium. Maria Kotopouli and her husband drove us to Sunium.

What is it that looks like camp fire smoke, out there on the promontory? The columns of a temple. Sunium is a wreckage in the sky, a ghost of beauty, a skeleton, cream rising from death, marble mud, sticks of cigar ash placed one on the other.

Blood flows in the veins of the marble of the Parthenon. The marble of Sunium is ash-white. Sea-spray has made it like cuttle-fish. Nothing could seem more strange than this corpse made of goat cheese, this kite made of bones, this moonlight shining in full day. A very active motor, and a military radio station shouting out oracles. Maria asks one of the soldiers to gather some tufts of the herb which can be put into all kinds of sauces (marjoram?).

From a distance the temple becomes incomprehensible. It only looks like pylons of re-inforced concrete. We decide to return home. (A soldier runs after us to tell us that he has found Lord Byron's signature after all). We are going over the hills at the hour of anemone dusk.

Sensual architecture. Erotic architecture. Greece raised vice to the level of virtue.

A Greek called me "decadent". That is how the poor treat the rich.

Greeks smile except when they dance.

In the Museum of Athens they let us into the infirmary where they look after sick statues. There they await their turn to be placed in the halls.

The very moment we went in I was struck dumb by the Aurige of Delphi. It is a green column on naked feet. The coloured eyes with silver lashes look over the heads of invisible horses. These horses would probably be like the bronze one which is lying on the ground further in, torn, dismembered, disemboweled as if by the explosion of an infernal machine. It was on this picador's horse, with its convoluted mouth turned back and showing the gums that the little jockey was mounted whom we saw in the lecture-hall amphitheatre. Now he is on horse-back in space with his legs wide apart, his behind in the air, his hand held high, holding a whip aloft. He must have looked tiny on the huge galloping horse.

It was in a fishing net that sailors brought up this other statue from the bottom of the sea, a statue of Zeus or may be Poseidon; once upon a time he sent lightning down to the earth—or was it a trident that he flung? His hair and beard still look wet. With his trident—or his lightning—he has lost his realistic eyes. He is blind. Like Homer, he recapitulates within himself all the gods and heroes of Greek myths. He opens up the compass of his great green legs in the middle of the waiting room. Crutches hold him up under his arms, and he brandishes his weapon in one hand while the other

points to the thing at which he stares with the big black olives which are his eyes.

In the inns which we visit, the singers use neither face nor voice to add to the tragedy of their song. They sing it and they say the words. They are the only chorus to it. In a far away impersonal voice, they tell us that the lady has ruined every one, that the young men commit suicide at her feet, and that no one blames her because she is beautiful. Their eyes tell us no more than this. They merely open their throats and let the story come out of their mouths solemnly.

The two young men of Knossos who have not yet been put on their feet! They sleep with their eyes wide open. Their smiles are full of mischief, yet dreaming. One foot in front of the other, they dream that they are walking. Their wigs of real hair fall down on to their slightly fleshy swimmers' shoulders.

Greece, France. Nations full of dialogue. Nations who monologue to themselves envy us.

What a salad an Athens morning makes! Leaves from the capitals of the columns, olive oil, Attic salt, and pepper from the pepper trees.

Sunday, 22nd May.

Yvonne, Marais and Louis are visiting the islands. I could not follow them because of lunch at the French Embassy. The way to the Embassy goes alongside the flower sellers' booths.

How like a dance is the changing of the guards at the war memorial! At 4 p.m. precisely, three soldiers come along in crocodile, dressed in white jerseys, little navy-blue kilts and enormous navy blue pompoms on the tips of their toes. They stop. They seem to scratch their left calves with their right feet, then they stamp on the ground with both feet, then they come towards each other,

dragging the left foot till it touches the right. The two sentinels who are being relieved move towards their companion who stands in the middle. And then the ballerinas with moustaches leave the esplanade.

In the first enclosure to the left of the temple of Dionysos they have by mistake left a phallus, as large as a full sized pillar, broken on the ground. Probably they did not see what it was. A serpent of seminal fluid runs from the top to the base. If the obscene column is turned on the other side, it can be seen that the phallus has been designed as carefully as an anatomical drawing. One can imagine the rôle played by these pillars in the architecture of the theatre of Dionysos when one looks at the hunched-up, Verlaine-like statues, covered with hair, terrible with indecency, winking and falling over.

One must not imagine that all the beauty around us was born of happiness. The slaves died of the work that they were forced to do, and it is their blood which lives in the marble. The Greeks were a charming race of slave-owners.

The Patriarch is dead. They follow him in procession. Like wings, the right hand sleeves flap as the cortège goes past, the kilts fly out and when they all turn their backs on us, you can see dark blue wings hanging from their shoulders.

Other choreographic scenes. First, the bust of the policeman which looks as if it were placed on the drum of an upright column. He waves his white arms to direct the traffic. Then another, in which pedestrians dance to avoid being crushed by cars.

We have come back from Corinth. The seven columns left standing look like a single rock which has thrown a temple upwards.

The Greeks despise Roman remains. Corinth does not interest them. It interests me. One can feel the city, the wide road, the squares, the open spaces, the shops. The baths in which the water still spurts up here and there like lizards. The little painted loggias with dainty pink pillars which open on to grottoes or caves or subterranean canals. But how different it is to visualise places which

have lost their contours! Except for the two theatres whose open fans face the sea.

In the Acts of the Apostles, it is said that when St. Paul came here, the people were quarrelling in the market place. Nothing has changed. Their politics are clan politics. They are still quarrelling about this person or that.

22nd May, 1949.

The Acropolis! I am back again in it. How lucky I am not to be an intellectual! How lucky I am not to be a partisan! How lucky to be a ridiculous creature on this strange platform, this aerodrome, this landing place for the gods. Of course I do know a few things, people have whispered a few secrets to me. I have read Renan and Maurras. But out here in the sun, I am void of remembrance, facing a void in which a few things dangle. Like an attic from childhood—nothing but a rat trap, some beams, a dress-maker's cane figure, folding steps, and the dust of centuries. The void—space. But what space! And they say:—"It must have been hideous when it was new. It's much lovelier without colours". Who? What? Where? What colours? What newness? Impossible to imagine a new attic. Things come there of their own accord. It is Fate. What can you do about it? Then you are in favour of a slave State? Of course not. Democrat? Of course not. Communist? Of course not. Royalist? Of course not. Then what are you? Under suspicion. Under suspicion of what? Of everything. Your papers? They were burnt in the great fire of Alexandria. It's Antoine's fault. Anthony's—but which? The producer, of course. Ah! he knew something about stage settings, about lighting. And the fool that I am, standing here staring, void of everything, I let folly creep into me, surrounded by these temple scenes. The voice of Passepartout, the voice of dead Passepartout, whispering in my ears:—"It's only

broken. It's not a ruin. Look . . .". And I look at the grasshopper's cage and the ladies holding a roof on their heads, and the weeds, and the lavender rocks, and Athene below and the theatre of Herod-Attica, where acoustics are so marvellous that in 1936 I could hear a couple quarrelling in whispers. And the architects draped in woollen garments, and Phidias saying:—"Order is disorder", and the slaves putting up the fluted drums of the columns one on the other. How terribly hot for them!

"You're not going to walk over that, are you?" That's Juno speaking. Hermes is flying down to the town. Pallas Athene alone stands still in her iron mask. She is looking down at her open hand which has a grasshopper in it. The grasshopper is Victory. You would not think so at first sight. That's what a ridiculous creature thinks with his ears singing strange songs.

And the photographers. The photographers of the Acropolis. They are coming towards me and want to photograph me. What impudence. Heaven knows what would come out on the plate. In *New York Life* took my photograph sitting sedately on a chair, and later I was seen to be flying round the room and giving my hand to Leo Coleman who was nude and whose feet were on the ceiling. It's the Marshall Plan! The Marshall Plan and the mysteries of the dark room. Perhaps I would be seen embracing a statue, like Charles Maurras, or signing the base of a column like Lord Byron. I would no longer dare to appear at the Embassy. The Ambassador would say to me:—"You have seriously compromised the cause of France". And it would all be the fault of the Marshall Plan. But try to prove it! The worst of it is that I have no sense of time, and that the building of the Parthenon, the time it became a church, the Mosque which was built inside it, the catastrophe of the powder magazine, my visit to it in 1936, Passepourtout speaking to me, Passepourtout killed in Alsace in 1940, this 1949 sunshine which caresses fair-skinned thighs of statues and the Turkish turbans lying amongst the poppies, it all seems like one single block of space, in which I am walking.

"You should see the Acropolis by moonlight, my dear!" So

the tourists say. No doubt they are right. But how do you get there in moonlight? There are iron gates, which are locked. There are gates and a box where one pays to get in. And guides, and men selling holy medals and books on the Acropolis. Then what can we do? Climb over the wall? Sit in a marble seat in the temple of Dionysos and wait? Wait for what? The moon, to be sure, the moon. It was the full moon and now it is no longer full. Nothing but closed gates; no moonlight. That makes things a bit difficult. "Diana, the chaste Diana, was great with . . .?" But you're mad. Be quiet, will you. You'll be seized by bandits who will bandage your eyes and you'll walk for eight hours without stopping into the mountains of Delphi. It happened four days ago to the Michauds, friends of yours, of the Arts Department of the University of Istanbul. "Because they said that Diana? . . . Will you be quiet!"

I am quiet. I am listening. I am listening to the deafening silence of centuries, of processions, of oracles, of bulls having their throats slit. What a strange ruined silence. What crumbled silence, with here and there a sentence dropping from it. It would be easy to feel afraid on this terrace. No doubt stone is a healthy blonde creature. Strange that this great blonde creature should be so healthy in the state in which she is here, and she so old. But it's true. And when Maurras flung his arms round her, she must have said to him, "You're mad!"

Egypt is flat. At Karnak everything rises up on tip-toe. Everything tries to look up in the air. On the Acropolis beauty lies at full length. She looks down sideways at the city and nibbles a blade of grass. That is how Greek beauty looks. Yet there are Oriental habits here. The horsemen sitting in the air and the ladies of the Erechtheion standing. Not even the Doge Morozini could persuade them to sit down, nor the horsemen to come to earth. And it might have been worth while. A powder-magazine exploding is rather dangerous. No! The ladies continued to hold the roof on their heads, and the horseman to dangle his legs and look after his horses. Horses in which swallows nest! Ladies who carry marble as if it were a basket of washing. It's incredible! Incredible! Let them

stay where they are. All the worse for them! That's what the Doge thought. The Doge was wise and he was right. And now they can neither sit down nor come down. It is too late.

It would have been so easy for them to take flight, to seek safety in the British Museum or in the Louvre, for instance. Then the explosion would have been nothing but a display of fireworks, only fireworks. Well, what's done is done. Nothing can be done about it now.

"So you prefer ancient sculpture?" I jump. Who asked me that? I am alone. Alone in the world in the Acropolis. It is true that it must be full of sentences like that, caught in the cracks and crevices, in the tangled brambles and tufts of grass and other similar traps for so-called lightly spoken words. Perhaps there are hidden microphones like those of Mr. Barnes in America. He hides them behind his pictures. Woe unto him who makes a hasty judgment! Giant figures appear and conduct the visitor out. If the King of Greece were to hear me! He would send along his moustachioed ballerinas and I would have a nasty time of it. It's true that I was wise enough not to answer. I might have said either that I preferred or did not prefer ancient sculpture. It would have been serious. Fortunately I said nothing. I was thinking of the poor man who was *struck by the picturesque*. Struck. Struck dead. Max Jacob has quoted this sentence:—"Suddenly he stopped, struck by the picturesque".

And if the picturesque struck me? But whatever made me afraid? I can breathe again. On the Acropolis there is not a single place anywhere in which the "picturesque" may hide.

23rd May, 1949.

We are leaving Greece feeling very sad. She received us better than if we had been kings—as old friends, very old friends. Maria

Kotopouli, the people from the Embassies, the Naval Attaché and the Military Attaché came to see us off.

Here we are once more, in a sky beaten by wings, above a sea on to which the soft skins of beasts have been thrown. It was a pity that we could not have given any of our plays in Athens. Taxes are too high and, besides, the Theatre Royal and the Theatre of Marika were not free. Countries should be able to find some solution to meet the difficulties of exchange. There should be certain exceptions to taxation rules. It should be possible for thought to circulate freely between France and Greece, which are so alike and in both of which dialogue is so very swift. Our stay has been too short, too full of all kinds of visits to gods and men to take very precise notes

The last visit was to Corinth yesterday with the Dutch Ambassador and the Lébels. We arrived in a sweeping wind full of dust. The seven columns, as I said before, looked like a rock which had split and become a temple. What is left of Greece? To tell the truth, except for the Theatre of Epidaurus, only a few traces. The only permanent thing is spirit. Nothing has changed in the character of this people of heroes and orators. In the islands, which have no cars, no bicycles, a host who invites a guest to the smallest of houses, shows us the beauty of soul of those who inhabit it. This person of whom I spoke, who *is* Greece, has neither good nor bad taste. He possesses that virtue which springs from neither one nor the other. He sees you through the crack in his helmet. If he likes you he lowers his lance and offers you all that he has.

Marika gave me a twelfth century Cyprus vase so beautiful that I was afraid to carry it as far as the aerodrome. It looks friendly but distant. To take it I had to camouflage it. It had to have roses and ribbons round it. May the Customs forgive me. I am taking it away full of warm ashes of dead days.

The plane is flying over the Ionian Sea. What is happening under us is indescribable. Cortèges through which one sees great bodies lying on jade and bronze. Here Hermes flew between two thieving flights.

His feet and his helmet bore him towards Athens, to the rock with the marble cages, to the aerodrome of the gods.

There they babbled and discussed and ruffled their wings. And men also babbled. And the cicadas babbled as they babbled yesterday at Corinth. It is to them that Homer compares the old men who babbled on the top of the ramparts of Troy.

I understand little of Corinth with its roads and open spaces, very little indeed. The inhuman disorder which is the opposite of human disorder is hateful. All these broken stones are disgusting. I feel sick at Eleusis. What I love is the water, which insists in popping out and running away down lizards' holes. It has never left the bathing pool and the theatrical-looking little bathing huts with their slender pillars which open up on to the grottoes and the incomprehensible canal system.

Corinth, the impregnable fortress which was always taken, impossible to defend in spite of her appearance of being made of a shield and a lance, in spite of her way of laughing at invaders with the two fans of her theatres, her red skin and her blue eyes turned to the sea.

What I liked in Corinth were the goats with black masks on the steps of the amphitheatre and the goatherds with their crooks ending in snakes, and the little boys who try to sell you tiny medals which they find in the earth and which look like little grapes (these become currants here). This morning Marais did not want to leave Athens. But it was too late to cancel his seat. Besides, we have no drachmas left, nothing left of those millions which make one feel so rich and which give one just enough for lunch. But one could live in Greece without taking a drachma out of one's pocket. It is really true. She houses and feeds you. She gives you everything and lets you think that you are giving her everything.

Here is the Gulf of Tarento, the sparkling spur of the boot. Paestum, Capri, Gaetia. We are following a route where gods on the move take on other names:—Minerva and Mercury come with us and we pass Corfu, where a lady would so much like to exchange her yacht for a plane! It is 3 o'clock. At 4 p.m. we shall be in

Rome. Our travelling companions have come direct from Istanbul. They know us. We look at maps together, exchange cigarettes, sign books, and tell each other news of our mutual friends. The journey is lengthened because the pilot is afraid of a storm near Tarento. The plane cannot go high enough to avoid it because we have not enough oxygen on board. So we go round the toe of the boot; at the narrowest point between the Ionian and the Tyrrhenian Seas, and then towards Naples by the Appenines.

For two months and seventeen days I have wandered through the centuries, through an inextricable tangle of civilisations and religions, of ruins, seas, and mountains. I have seen the people of the Bible passing American cars, Byzantium holding out her old hand covered with rings, Athens fighting and smiling through her tears. For two months and seventeen days I have been flying on an Eastern Carpet and the winged horse of Hellas. For two months and seventeen days I have been treading dead towns and living towns which are jealous of each other. While above ground men try to find their balance again, and below ground the princes of vanity sleep beneath their golden masks. For two months and several years I have been an archeologist of souls. For many years I have been out of my village with its golden weathercock, for many years I have wandered between sarcophagi, sphinxes, drinking fountains and tombs and the mute drums of pillars. Now I look out of the windows. Under the left wing, the rock of Capri, which looks so hard and is so tender. From afar it looks like Sparta, but it is Capua. Under the right wing, the Acropolis of Vesuvius. Its pillars are smoke. It dreams with its mouth open. Its temple is the temple of fire.

Landing in Rome. We are late. We cannot possibly be in Paris by 9 p.m.

We should have given the plays in Athens and Rome. It is a pity that our company ended its tour in Turkey, for we shall never be able to get such a company together again.

A Greek told me the story of the good and the bad German. A family who loved their piano tenderly had to give house room to a

German General. He was frightful. He played the piano very badly and put it out of order. He was replaced by a good German General. The new one had the piano repaired and played it marvellously. Oh! what a good German General he was. He then left the family—with the piano.

A French lady in Athens said to the Dutch Ambassador:—
“Take care! I passed the Embassy yesterday. Your flag is flying the wrong way up!”

It is the poet in Ata-Turk which really fascinates the Turks although they do not know it. When he had had enough to drink he was very genial. He drank several bottles of raki a day. He died of it, but without going to these excesses he would never have saved his fellow countrymen. I am always afraid of vegetarian heads of states. They eat men.

We can only do propaganda surreptitiously and in the realm of those things which foreign policy leaves alone because it thinks that they are not worth while. This propaganda is cheap, as I have seen. And in the long run such propaganda, despised by rich nations, is unbeatable.

An outstanding film sent in a diplomatic bag and shown without thought of profit in the Universities, would bring in more in the end than films which are said to be good commercial propositions but badly shown in ordinary cinemas. At the end of some months our prestige would go up, because young people would plead our cause with their families and it would go round that French films do not resemble the trash which the film industry gives out because they are supposed to be box office successes.

Our present state of spiritual insolvency in the eyes of other countries does not come from systematic ill-will. It comes from laziness, forgetfulness, the piling up of documents and contacts which either work badly or not at all. It is enough for an important short sentence to be forgotten, or a telegram to be left on a table.

We are passing over the island of Elba.

Influence of Napoleon as an actor. Like the statue of Ata-Turk



The "Blond Stone". Corinthian Capitol in Old Corinth.

(By courtesy of Greek Government)

at the Park Hotel. He is in a dress suit. One hand in his waistcoat and the other behind his back.

We have left the wonderful region where East and West are wedded to each other—the region which is both orientated and disorientated, which is full of marvels and such soft colours. The brightly coloured Oriental scene, and ours in half-tones, mingle here and form an iridescent scarf. The Mediterranean influences the many dissimilar nations on her borders with the same iodine and the same very subtle salts, and when these nations quarrel they can only do so as families do. It is against this background that the bitterness of the Turkish papers concerning the incident of the Greek sportsmen should be judged. The incident immediately became disproportionate, a question of politics, irremediable. This would not happen between peoples who hate one another.

I have seen nothing but countries suspicious of each other, cities jealous of one another, but I have never felt that this was serious. They love France. It would take very little to abolish completely these marriages of convenience which countries are content to put up with and establish something truly lasting.

Nothing would be more ridiculous than to fear the colours with which the temples are painted. Once one has seen the sarcophagus at Istanbul which is said to be Alexander's, one understands that the colours penetrated into the texture of the marble, they did not hide it, and they gave it the many-hued transparency of vegetables.

Thinking of Egypt and of Greece:—if the slave-system of ancient Egypt reminds one of ants and termites, then the Greek system comes nearer to that of bees. Everything in it is blonde white, full of light and honey. How could one help thinking of bees when one remembers that, in the hive of the Acropolis, the Greeks tore off the wings of Victories.

A man of the present age feels uneasy no doubt at the thought of the slave system. But if we want to read the scroll, the tables of universal suffrage, we go to the Gambetta Monument, in the Place du Carrousel. Poor pyramid, poor obelisk!

And here in my neighbour's magazine I suddenly see the shining

crested dove which Picasso showed me at the rue des Grands Augustins, on the eve of my departure. It is now at the top of the rostrum of the Congress of Peace in Berlin. It makes my return the more delightful.

"Ideas which change the face of the world" . . .

The pilot points out to us our obelisk, our minaret, our acropolis—the Eiffel Tower.

24th May, 1949.

Coming back to Paris, I expected that it would be engaged in political discussions. I was wrong. The whole city is discussing a newly discovered manuscript of Rimbaud, *La Chasse Spirituelle*. Is it authentic? Is it apocryphal? As far as I am concerned it is laboured and without soul. André Breton's letter says just what should be said about it. But what is amazing is that a whole city should become excited about Arthur Rimbaud. That is the city that I love, and this controversy proves to me that I was right in explaining to the Egyptians and the Turks why France is indescribable and why nothing which concerns her can be seen in advance.

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